VALLEY VOICE

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Worthley Delivers State of the County

Steve Worthley

As chair for 2015 it is my privilege to share with my colleagues, county staff and county residents a vision for Tulare County in the coming year which I sincerely hope will become a vision shared by one and all.

Steve Worthley

The finances and employee base of the county have never been stronger. As of August, 2015, the county will have only a $4 million outstanding long term financial obligation other than our defined benefit retirement plan which at 89% is the highest funded 37 Act retirement system in the state. This is a far cry from where we have come in the last 15 years when 5% of our annual budget was dedicated to servicing the debts of the county. But more important to the health of our county than a strong financial position are our employees. We have, in my opinion, a team from management to line staff, of unparalleled abilities and work ethic benefiting the residents of Tulare County and providing great services. Without our employees and their commitment to service, nothing could be or would be accomplished and to them I say, thank you.

Now as to short term goals, most of which are already in progress, mention of some of the highlights is appropriate. My apologies to departments that go unmentioned. Even a cursory review of each department's plans would take up the entire morning. The following are representative of ongoing improvements which are occurring throughout the county.

In the sheriff's department, newly elected sheriff, Mike Boudreaux continues the transformation using civilians where appropriate while strategically increasing the numbers of sworn officers to benefit our residents and their property. Progress continues on the planning, design and beginning construction of a new jail facility in Porterville and the demolition and reconstruction of training and housing facilities at Sequoia Field.

The county library systems new county librarian, Darla Wegener, will soon be on board and charged with continuing the work already underway to re-open the Farmersville Branch. Beginning with the vision of one individual the unincorporated community of London will soon have its own library branch. With no public school or county public facilities of any kind, the library represents a renewed county commitment to the residents of our disadvantaged communities, and to Mr. Robert Isquierdo, raised in London, goes a sincere thanks for remembering his heritage.

Child Support Services director, Roger Dixon, has recently come on board and is charged with working with our employees in that department to transform the work environment and improve service delivery.

The district attorney's office under the newly elected district attorney, Tim Ward will be planning on moving its investigative unit into the court house consolidating its operations and improving

COUNTY continued on **16 »**

Instead of the traditional shovels in the ground, Governor Jerry Brown, Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin, Gina McCarthy, head of the Environmental Protection Agency, and about 40 other dignitaries signed a ceremonial piece of steel rail that will be on display at the Sacramento Railroad Museum.

HSR Breaks Ground on January 6

Catherine Doe

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) held its official ground breaking for the High-Speed Rail (HSR) on January 6 in downtown Fresno. The ceremony took place at the site of the future Fresno train station, located on the corner of Tulare and G streets.

The Authority is building 520 miles of track connecting San Francisco and Los Angeles with several daily stops in Fresno. Completion of the project is anticipated to be in 2029. Eventually, the Authority hopes to expand from Sacramento to San Diego, encompassing 800 miles of rail and 24 stations. The goal is to integrate HSR with BART, the LA Metro and the Rapid Transit Bus system that was just approved to be built in Fresno. The trains will travel in excess of 200 miles an hour, with a trip from the Bay Area to LA taking under three hours. Ticket prices are projected to be from $81 to $89.

The first 130 miles being built

HSR continued on **11 »**

Visalia City Council to Allow Members to Appeal Planning Commission Decisions

Catherine Doe

On January 5, the Visalia City Council voted to allow council members to appeal planning commission decisions that involve project maps. The vote reverses a 2010 ordinance prohibiting council members from appealing those decisions. Council members Amy Shuklian, Warren Gubbler, and Greg Collins voted to remove the restrictions, while Mayor Steve Nelsen and member Bob Link voted to keep the restrictions in place. The new ordinance still needs to come back to the city council two times before it is officially on the books.

Alex Peltzer, city attorney, presented three options to the council: One; it could vote to retain the 2010 ordinance, which states that if a council member

COUNCIL continued on **6 »**

More Trouble at Tulare County Animal Control

Catherine Doe

A family pet named Clyde, embroiled in a vicious dog case, was recently stolen from Tulare County Animal Control (TCAC).

"Sometime during the evening of January 4, or morning of January 5, someone cut the fences at the adjacent building and then broke into the Animal Control facility. They cut into the dog's kennel, took the animal, and at this time the dog's location remains unknown. No other animals were harmed or stolen and no other property was removed from the animal control facility." according to County Media Officer, Melissa Withnell.

Wendy Jones, the dog's owner, is pleading for information concerning Clyde's whereabouts and safety. Many times fighting back tears from the exhaustion of a legal battle, and the loss of her dog, Jones explained how she had just filed papers at Tulare County Superior Court concerning Clyde when she heard of the break-in at TCAC. After seeing the story on the news, friends called Jones on the January 5 to tell her that her dog had been stolen. Jones is in a fight with the county, which has declared the dog a menace to society and has ordered the dog to be euthanized.

Trouble started for Jones' family when, on October 28 of last year, Clyde bit Jones' grandson. Jones' 18 month-old grandson took some of the dog's food when Clyde had been put in a separate room to eat. The dog bit the child on the face, going down to the muscle and requiring stitches on his mouth and eye area. The wounds are healing and further surgery does not appear to be required.

It is now incumbent on Jones to prove that Clyde is not a danger to society and did not have a history of biting or vicious behavior. According to Jones, Clyde is a family pet that plays with people, cats, and other dogs. He rides in the

ANIMAL CONTROL continued on **11 »**

SeaPort Changes Schedule to Offer Sacramento

Staff Reports

At the January 5 City Council meeting, the council approved the submission of a letter to the Department of Transportation (DOT) in support of a change of air service proposed by SeaPort Airlines, Visalia's sole air carrier. The change, replacing Oakland with Sacramento (SMF) as a destination for 12 weekly roundtrips from Visalia's Municipal Airport, is pending approval. The request does not change the 12 weekly roundtrips to Burbank.

The change provides Visalia with

SEAPORT continued on **5 »**

Visalia, California (VIS)

Flt #	Leave	Arrive	Stops	Frequency	Flt #	Leave	Arrive	Stops	Frequency
TO: Burbank					**FROM: Burbank**				
K5 5201	6:10am	7:15am	0	ExSun	K5 5200	8:10am	9:15am	0	ExSun
K5 5206	2:00pm	3:05pm	0	ExSat	K5 5205	3:30pm	4:35pm	0	ExSat
TO: Imperial/El Centro					**FROM: Imperial/El Centro**				
K5 5201/K5 5112	6:10am	8:45am	BUR	ExSun	K5 5111/K5 5200	5:45am	9:15am	BUR	ExSun
K5 5206/K5 5116	2:00pm	6:00pm	BUR	ExSat					
TO: Sacramento					**FROM: Sacramento**				
K5 5300	9:45am	11:10am	0	ExSun	K5 5301	11:40am	1:05pm	0	ExSun
K5 5302	5:00pm	6:25pm	0	ExSat	K5 5303	6:45pm	8:10pm	0	ExSat
TO: San Diego					**FROM: San Diego**				
K5 5201	6:10am	8:35am	1	ExSun	K5 5200	6:30am	9:15am	1	ExSun
K5 5206	2:00pm	3:05pm	1	ExSat	K5 5205	2:00pm	4:35pm	1	ExSat
TO: San Felipe					**FROM: San Felipe**				
K5 5201/K5 9001	6:10am	11:00am	SAN	MonThuSat	K5 9002/K5 5205	11:40am	4:45pm	SAN	MonThuSun

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FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

Where's Sarah Palin When You Need Her?

Let's first stipulate that nobody needs Sarah Palin. Ever. She has made herself into one of the first class buffoons of our era--and she has every right to have done so. So--good for her! Congratulations! But this column is not about her, or what she can see from her house. Don't think Sarah Palin; think, instead, of the infamous "bridge to nowhere." Only in this case think, rather, the rails to nowhere.

On January 6 the California High-Speed Rail held its official groundbreaking ceremony in Fresno, at the site of that city's future train station. Yet no spades of earth were turned. It was a glorious day, really--an historic one--and many dignitaries attended, including Governor Jerry Brown, and those who gave a speech each spoke very well. Especially the Governor, whose passion for the eventual completion of the rail system was unequivocal. Sunshine smiled upon the gathering and, after the best early morning chill that winter could hurl, temperatures rose to nearly 70 degrees. The media were conducted on quite an informative tour of the site, the former Del Monte building downtown, which has been demolished, and it was made very clear that--high-speed rail notwithstanding--the entire area was, in short order, to be gentrified. The speeches were then given, naturally culminating with Governor Brown's, after which, to some inane pop music fanfare, a section of rail was hand signed by the grandees who assembled before it. This artifact is destined for display at the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento.

Got the picture? Now--what do you picture when thinking about the last significant rail event our country has celebrated? I give it even money you've harked instantly back to the text books of your grade school days, and an image of two railroad engines--nose to nose on a single track in Promontory Summit, Utah--has formed in your mind. The May 10,1869, completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, right? A big day, indeed: Samuel G. Montague of the Central Pacific Railroad, on the left, shaking hands with Grenville M. Dodge of the Union Pacific Railroad, both, apparently, bearded, and surrounded by a crowd of--well, who knows, exactly? And right about now, if they haven't before, the words "Golden Spike" should come to mind. At least, that is, for those of us who attended grade school. It was ingrained in our minds as a momentous event--so much so that a national historic site now commemorates the fastening of that final spike.

You are to be forgiven if your assumption was such that the section of rail signed was actually a sample length of the high-speed rail track to be laid. It was not. I have no idea what the new, high-tech track is to look like--but it would have been much better if a section of that had been signed. Instead--even though it looked as if it had just been forged--a nicely cleaned and polished piece of good old steel rail was placed into History. We're talking a length of rail nearly identical to that commemorated at Promontory Summit nearly 146 years ago: Rail upon wooden cross-ties every several feet, nailed down there--yes, the Golden Spike was just a big nail--with clamps. What's the sense in this? One hundred forty-six years from now, in 2161 (I'll finally be a grown-up of 198 by that point) will this old-school track have the same resonance that the Golden Spike today enjoys? I think not. What's the sense in touting the high-speed rail as high-tech--as the Future--then celebrating its groundbreaking by signing track that would be recognized as contemporary by those at the very dawn of rail travel?

Take a vacation to the Sacramento of the future--say, 146 years from now. Let's say you have brought your son--who is, naturally enough, a toy train enthusiast--to the historic California State Railroad Museum.

"Look, Junior--there's the exhibit commemorating our nation's first high-speed railroad. You can see where the governor at the time signed it."

"What year was that again, Dad?"

Not, "Where did he sign it?" or, "Who was the governor then, Dad?" Not much, after all, of a remembrance.

And this is not a good selling point. I happen to be very much in favor of the high-speed rail going forward, and I think it is quite important that it does so here, in our state--the state that leads our country in everything from agriculture to entertainment to high-tech. I am one of those who believe that the high-speed rail is, indeed, the Future. But the project does have its critics--there was a paltry assemblage of protesters outside the groundbreaking--and nobody is entirely comfortable with how much money will eventually be spent on it.

There is, too--and in no small measure--a curiosity factor. What does track over which a train travels in excess of 200 miles per hour look like? That would have been worth signing. It would be worth exhibiting in a museum for posterity to ponder. More than anything, it would be historically accurate. I mean, they may as well have signed the thing using quills. The rail destined for display says absolutely nothing about our time, and what we aim to accomplish. It is symbolic of--what, exactly? The Golden Spike at least represents the technology of its time and, being golden, is also indicative of the Guilded Age it heralded.

I need to know how the display will in any way be relevant not only to our time, but to any time. I need to know what anyone could possibly learn from this exhibit in the future. I need someone to explain the rationale behind all this.

Indeed--where is Sarah Palin when you need her?

— Joseph Oldenbourg

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Political Fix

Catherine Doe

Barbara Boxer Announces She Won't Run For Senate In 2016

Senator Barbara Boxer announced last week that she would not be running for reelection in 2016. First winning in 1992, the 2016 race would have been for her fifth term. There is also speculation that, at 81, Senator Dianne Feinstein might decide not to run in 2018. Along with the termed-out Governor Jerry Brown, this might leave the three most important offices in California open. That's a power vacuum begging to be filled by a new generation of lawmakers.

Sen. Boxer wanted to announce early that she would not be running in order to give prospective candidates time to fundraise and put together an effective campaign. It's been said that often elections are won in the off-year while laying the groundwork.

Democrats have a pretty deep bench when it comes to potential senate candidates. Maybe too deep. It has already been decided by the political pundits that Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom and Attorney General Kamala Harris need to do a back room deal and divide the spoils. As both Mr. Newsome and Ms. Boxer will be termed out of their current office, it was believed that one will run for the governorship and the other for the senate. Ms. Harris settled it on January 13 by announcing that she will run for Sen. Boxer's seat.

The last time two popular candidates divided the spoils between running for senator and governor was in 1958--and both ended up losing. They were Republican Gov. Goodwin Knight and Republican Senator William Knowland, two names only your elderly parents would remember. Sen. Knowland was exploring the idea of running for president, and thought that a better jumping-off point would be as Governor of California. He strong-armed Gov. Knight to "switch" places with him and run for senate. That way he and Knight would not have to face each other in the primary for governor.

Sen. Knowland went on to easily win the Republican nomination for Governor but end up losing to Attorney General Pat Brown--Jerry's Brown's dad.

My grandmother, Florence Doe, ran the 1958 senate campaign for Gov. Knight in Tulare County. The "switch" was not popular with voters, and Gov. Knight also lost his bid for senate to a Bakersfield native, Congressman Clair Engle. My grandmother received a gracious letter of gratitude for all of her hard work on his campaign, but even better, Gov. Pat Brown appointed my grandmother to the State Fair Board, even though she was a Republican.

Lt. Gov. Newsome and Atty. Gen. Harris won't be concocting an elaborate switch, but voters may be just as put off at the idea of two popular candidates manipulating the system for their political convenience. Whether the voters will be upset enough to elect a Republican might be a stretch, but they might rebel and actually elect someone from the Southland.

Whoever does end up running better start building up their war chest right now, as 2016's has been predicted to be the most expensive race in California to date.

Setting It Straight

Every two years California holds elections for all of the assembly seats and half of the senate. This year's new session started on January 5, and welcomed many new members. There were 37 new legislators, 38 new committee chairs and three new leaders atop their caucuses. One of those new leaders is our Tulare County Representative, Assemblyman Devon Mathis. I'm not saying this for my well-informed readers' sake--but more for the *Visalia Times-Delta's*.

Assemblyman Mathis was elected on November 4, sworn into office on December 1, and has been sitting at his desk in the assembly since the first week of January. Until well into December the *Visalia Times-Delta* was still listing former Assemblywoman Connie Conway as being in office. They no longer list Ms. Conway, but have failed to once list Assemblyman Mathis as our elected official alongside all the other officials on their editorial page.

So I think I'll help them out. They can just copy and paste Assemblyman Mathis' information into their newspaper. The *Valley Voice* has received about 10 press releases or communiqués from Assemblyman Mathis' office. Each one clearly indicates his new Sacramento office and phone number in case a constituent needs to contact him. Now maybe the *Visalia Times-Delta* can put it in their paper also!

Office of Assemblyman Devon J. Mathis
California's 26th Assembly District
State Capitol, Room 5126
Sacramento CA, 94249-0026
(916) 319-2026 office, (916) 319-2126 fax
Local Visalia Office phone number - 636-3440

Here's a statement from Assemblyman Mathis' office referring to the *Visalia Times-Delta*: "I hope they update their paper soon. It's important that people be able to have accurate information on how to contact their elected officials."

A Fractured House

The Republican-run House of Representatives convened on January 6 with mighty plans to dismantle everything Obama, such as the new immigration and health care reforms. They almost have the number to do it, too.

The Republican Party controls 247 of the 435 seats. That is the biggest Republican contingent in the House since 1931. Republicans also hold 54 of the 100 Senate seats. Democrats took a beating in the 2014 elections, but analysts say that the tables will turn for the 2016 election. Republicans will have to defend three-fourths of their Senate seats whereas very few Democrats will be up for reelection.

So how did the first day go? Not well for Speaker Boehner. In the first vote of the 114th Congress ,25 Republicans from the conservative wing of the party voted against electing Rep. Boehner as Speaker of the House for his third term in that position.

Speaker Boehner could have lost many more Republican votes and still won the speakership, but 25 Republican votes against him was historic and clearly shows he does not have the confidence of the hard-liners. As a result, he took revenge the next day on the Tea Party congressmen who voted against him, stripping several conservative Republicans who actually ran against him for Speaker of their committee appointments.

So what will the Republican-controlled Congress get accomplished this session? Not a heck of a lot with a fractured party.

Romney Announces He Wants To Be President

The third time's the charm--at least it will be for Hillary Clinton when she's challenged by former Presidential candidate, Mitt Romney. "I want to be president," he told a room of Republican donors during a fundraiser in New York on January 9.

No kidding, Mitt. I think the American public got the message the first two times you ran.

Mr. Romney, who ran for president in 2008 and 2012, made his announcement right on the heels of Jeb Bush's announcing his interest in running. That must have gone down well at the unofficial Bush campaign headquarters. In mid December Mr. Bush said that he was actively exploring a 2016 presidential bid. His announcement put him at the top of the pack in political support and fundraising potential.

Poll after poll of has listed Mr. Romney as the Republican favorite, and his vanity must have gotten the better of him. Until this point Mr. Romney has insisted that he will not run. Prospective Republican nominees have mostly been compared against each other, with Mr. Romney's name thrown in at times for entertainment purposes. Now Mr. Romney's announcement disrupts the entire field of hopefuls. An interesting primary just became moot as the Republicans always hand the baton over to the oldest white guy. Sorry Jeb. At 67, Mitt has got you by 6 years.

Mr. Romney has the charisma, looks and money to win the Republican nomination. But Mr. Bush is the only one with a prayer of beating Ms. Clinton. According to the conservatives, Mr. Bush is seen as a problem candidate because of his stance on immigration. Mr. Romney is the one sheltering up to $35 million in the Cayman Islands but, ironically, it's Mr. Bush who is seen as the one with baggage for following his Christian beliefs. The mindset of people who once counted slaves as three-fifths of a human being is currently evinced by those complaining about President Obama's stopping the deportation of parents whose children were born here. How can it matter if your family is torn apart, or you can't see a doctor or drive a car because you are an illegal--i.e., only three-fifths human?

I wish the people who are anti-immigrant/human being put their money where their hypocritical mouths are. If they don't think illegals should be here then they should quit hiring them, quit eating the food they harvest, working in the offices they clean, staying in the hotel rooms they clean and enjoying the gardens they take care of. Giving people shelter who seek sanctuary from political or economic oppression is the Christian thing to do. It's in the Bible, a book the right wing would do well to crack open once in a while.

Mr. Jobs, Jobs, Jobs Romney never did explain how many jobs have been created with that $35 million or so of his sitting in the Caymans. Something makes me think that Mr. Bush will release the last 10 years of his tax returns no questions asked. And Mr. Romney will squirm, hem and haw while trying to jimmy one tax return so it looks as though he almost pays as much, percentage wise, as his secretary. Mr. Romney is a living, breathing example of why tax cuts to the rich do not create jobs. He lost twice, kind of making a fool of himself explaining away his more liberal former self as the governor of Massachusetts while a more conservative version of himself tried to win the Republican nomination. And this is the person the Republican Party wants to showcase as their guy? Figures.

GOP Strives For Diversity

Republicans elected their first Black woman to congress, Mia Love from Utah. Ms. Love, the former mayor of Saratoga Springs, was elected last November. Democrats beat them out by 47, years but some might consider that's changing fast for the Republican Party.

Republicans are hoping for a diverse slate of presidential candidates that can attract a growing minority population. Former Hewlett Packard CEO, Carly Fiorina, seems to be the only Republican woman who has expressed interest in running. She was quoted as saying that, "This is a diverse nation and we need to be a diverse party. That doesn't mean we sacrifice our principles, but it means we need to look like and understand and empathize with the nation." But a changing face does not change Republican attitudes and policies. Ms. Fiorina might want to actually back up her diversity quote with some real legislation that helps minorities, beginning with the criminal justice system and immigration policy. The party could throw in some "empathy" while they do it. Voter identification laws aren't exactly endearing the party to minorities either, as "voter reform" has been targeted to keep minorities from voting

Even though the three top contenders for the Republican nomination are pasty White guys, the Republican Party does have some minorities in the wings and making noise. Eighty-five percent of Cuban Americans identify as White, so considering Ted Cruz, who is only half, and Marco Rubio, as Hispanic is a stretch, and a designation I'm sure they only use when it is politically advantageous. That leaves only Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal, whose parents are from India, and third-tier candidate Dr. Ben Carson, who is African American, as the remaining potential presidential candidates of color. As mentioned in an earlier issue, Dr. Carson is over the minimum Intelligence Quota to be even considered a serious candidate. Incomprehensibly, conservative political pundits classify Jeb Bush as a minority because he is bilingual and his wife is Mexican. I guess that would make New York mayor Bill De Blasio a Black lesbian.

POLITICAL FIX continued on **5 »**

Steve Worthley and Mike Ennis being sworn in.

New, Former Office Holders Sworn In on First Week of January

Staff Reports

During the January 6 Tulare County Board of Supervisors (BOS) meeting, Supervisors Steve Worthley and Mike Ennis were sworn-in for another four-year term. Worthley ran unopposed for District 4 while Ennis beat out challenger Porterville City Council Member Virgina Gurrola in District 5. The BOS also elected a new chairman, selecting Worthley for the top position.

"A new year brings new challenges and opportunities to Tulare County," said Worthley. "Serving as the 2015 chair, I look forward to working with my colleagues on the board, our able staff and the good folks of our county to move the county forward, rebuilding and retooling local government to meet the needs of a changing society."

Worthley, who was first elected 16 years ago, replaces District Three Supervisor Phil Cox, who served as chairman in 2014. Ennis was chosen to serve as vice chairman. Each member of the BOS performs the duties as chairman through a rotation process. The chairman is charged with setting and running weekly meetings and attending functions on behalf of the board, among other additional duties.

During the meeting, Cox passed a new gavel to Worthley, and later delivered a wrap-up speech for 2014, highlighting programs and projects the county initiated in 2014 and expressing his appreciation to his colleagues, county administration, all county departments and their employees for their work during his tenure as chairman of the board.

"I'm proud to say that we ended 2014 on a strong note," said Cox. "We entered the new year with a strong, balanced budget and I'm happy to say that all of our projects are fully funded. I know the board will continue to accomplish great things in 2015."

Ennis also took a moment during the meeting to thank the community for its support of him throughout the re-election process.

"It's an honor to have been re-elected as the District 5 Supervisor," he said. "I look forward to the next four years and to the opportunity to make our county a better place to live for all residents," he said.

Worthley also announced that he will deliver the annual State of the County address at the Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, January 13 at 9am. This will be Worthley's fourth time serving as chairman.

In other BOS news, Tulare County Sheriff Mike Boudreaux was authorized to appoint an undersheriff. The county has gone without an undersheriff since October 2013, when then Sheriff Bill Wittman stepped down due to health reasons. Boudreaux, who took over for Wittman, could not appoint a replacement because he was still technically undersheriff.

On January 5, the Tulare County Courthouse was the scene of three more swearing in ceremonies. Tulare County Superintendent of Schools, Jim Vidak, was sworn in by his son, State Senator Andy Vidak. Jim Vidak was elected to a record seventh term as superintendent. Also sworn in were Assessor and Clerk Recorder Roland Hill and Auditor-controller, Treasurer and Tax Collector and Registrar of Voters, Rita Hill. Both ran unopposed.

On January 2, Boudreaux was sworn in as the 30th Tulare County Sheriff. Tulare County has not had a changing of the guard in more than 20 years as Wittman ran and won for five terms. Wittman was in attendance at the ceremony and helped introduce Boudreaux, expressing how he always envisioned Boudreaux' eventually holding the office.

Tim Ward, who was sworn in on December 18 as district attorney, also represents a changing of the guard. The former district attorney, Phil Cline, who left in 2012, had also held office for 20 years.

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Visalia Seeks $583,053 Shuttle Grant

Staff Reports

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is expected next month to decide whether it will fund the City of Visalia's grant application for $583,053. The city hopes to establish a 16-passenger shuttle bus service between Visalia and Fresno this fall.

In applying to the District, the city contends that such a public transportation service would be significant in helping to reduce emissions. If granted, Visalia would use the funds to purchase three buses and subsidize fares until ridership demand stabilizes the price. Currently, Greyhound offers service five times per day between Visalia and Fresno for nearly $20 one way. A goal of the grant is to keep ticket prices close to $10 until ridership demand, projected to take so long as three years, is such that the base one-way fare settles close to that figure. Students, seniors and the disabled might qualify for a discount.

The program is expected to cost over $800,000.

One motivation behind the city's application is the possibility of Visalia Municipal Airport losing its Essential Air Service status if it does not meet minimum enplanement or subsidy targets. SeaPort Airlines' contract ends in 2016, and plans to begin service on February 9, taking over service from Great Lakes Airlines.

Fresno Yosemite International Airport would be a destination of the proposed shuttle. In addition to Fresno and Visalia airports, other stops would include Fresno State, Manchester Center and Courthouse Park. The return trip to Visalia would terminate at the Visalia Transit Center. From there to the Fresno Airport would require approximately 55 minutes. The journey to Fresno State would take 11 minutes longer.

The shuttle's weekday-only service would make four roundtrips to Fresno at 6am, 9am, 1pm and 4pm.

Democrats to Hold Office Grand Opening on Jan 23

Staff Reports

The Tulare County Democratic Party will start the new year with a grand opening on Friday., January 23 opening of a year round-office in downtown Visalia and its first step to enhance its presence and preparation for the 2016 election cycle.

Ruben Macareno, chairman of the Tulare County Democratic Party, states the local Democratic Central Committee is moving forward with the vision of making the local party an effective entity by having a centralized location to meet, organize, strategize, work and prepare for future elections particularly for those in 2016.

"It's a long time coming and necessary," said Macareno.

Macareno's background as an editorial department administrator at the Los Angeles Times and staffer at the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials in Washington DC, felt running a smooth political operation requires a workspace. This is something local Democrats have not had other than a three-month lease leading up to the presidential election every four years.

After the June 2014 Primary, Democrats faired poorly. The party's federal, state and local candidate results in county returns were low and in the state assembly race, in particular, no Democrat made it onto the general election ballot, including Macareno who also ran along with two other Democrats.

As county chair, Macareno took the obligatory role to find what needs fixing.

He immediately conducted a series of meetings and joined a general election campaign for supervisor to get a firsthand look into the operations of local Democratic campaign practices. Macareno made numerous notations of meetings, experiences and results.

Local party officials felt that before the local party can be restructured, the first step would be to open an office so all that is being discussed and planned can be conducted in an environment of continuity.

"The reorganization needs to begin at the top then on down to its clubs, candidates, volunteers and others," said Macareno.

The local SEIU group afforded the county committee a space for its monthly meetings. Prior to Macareno becoming chairman, meetings were conducted in restaurants.

The central committee's general meetings will be held in a conference room and smaller committee meetings within the office.

Macareno stresses that the office is not a campaign office, but an administrative and fundraising office. The campaign headquarters for the Presidential Election cycle will be at another site and will open at the appropriate time.

The Grand Opening will be held from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Montgomery Square, 208 W. Main Street, Suite K in downtown Visalia. Food and drinks will be served. The public is invited to attend.

For more information email ruben.macareno@tularecdp.org or call 559-372-7206.

Hanford Commission Appointments Named

Staff Reports

Many city appointments were named at the January 6 meeting of the Hanford City Council. Mayor Russ Curry proposed the following, which were all approved with little discussion necessary.

Those included were: Bill Gundacker – Kings Mosquito Abatement District, Dorothey Callihan-Weiss – Kings County Commission on Aging, Demeatrus Robinson and Jack Schwartz – Tree Commission, James MacLellan II and Glenda Dwyer – Parking and Traffic Commission, Catherine Wilis – Parks & Recreation Commission, and Travis Paden, Dennis Ham and Michael Johnston – Planning Commission.

Also up for discussion on the agenda, was a new irrigation system for the Bob Hill Youth Athletic Complex baseball fields. The contract was awarded to Clean Cut Landscape of Clovis, at a cost of $49,180. Supply costs for renovations were an additional $42,745, which was also approved.

Next deadline: January 29, 2015

Political Fix

Continued from p. 3

California's Political Graveyard

In any other state, a congressional seat is often a stepping-stone to a higher office, but not in California. Some states, such as New Hampshire or Nebraska, have only two or three congressional members, and that makes running for senator or governor the next logical step in their political careers. But with a delegation of 53 members, becoming a congress member in California has become a politician's graveyard. Barbara Boxer made the transition from Congresswoman to Senator, but in a squeaker of an election where she won at the last minute because it was discovered that her opponent had frequented a strip club. (That was 1992, and now that women go to strip clubs, too, it's more socially acceptable.)

It's hard to believe that someone as successful as Rep. Devin Nunes will never hold a higher office, but it's true. The problem with being a congress member in California is that only a small slice of the state even knows of your existence. Mention Rep. Nunes' name in San Luis Obispo, and no one will know who he is. On the other hand, North Dakota only has one congressional seat--so everyone in the state would know who their representative is.

So the only way to more power is working your way up the ladder in the House, making Rep. Kevin McCarthy's (R-Bakersfield) ascent quite impressive. It also makes Rep. Nunes' appointment to the the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence very impressive. It's a fortunate thing that Rep. Nunes is in the good graces of Rep. Boehner and had the necessary chops, because that's about as far as a California congress member can go.

SeaPort

Continued from p. 1

the Central Valley's only daily air service to the state capital at a fare only slightly higher than train fare: $59 one-way. The airline will provide a special discounted "Get Onboard" fare of $39 one-way to both Sacramento and Burbank for flights up to March 31, if booked by March 15.

Ticket sales began on January 13, and are available on SeaPort's website or most travel websites.

On January 6, SeaPort sent a formal request to the DOT seeking approval of the change of service on an expedited basis in order to begin service on February 9. Throughout the entire proposal process, SeaPort has demonstrated a willingness to tailor its service to meet the needs of the community while trying to determine what routes and times would provide the greatest increase in passenger utilization. The Air Service Subcommittee (Council Members Link and Gubler) and staff concurred with SeaPort's recommendation, believing that the change from Oakland to Sacramento will better suit the business travelers in our market.

"They [SeaPort] put a bid in on our service in 2012, when Great Lakes did, which ultimately went to Lakes," said Visalia Municipal Airport manager, Mario Cifuentes. "And during meetings at that time council would always say, could you get into Sacramento? And at that time, they couldn't, Sacramento's rates and fee structure was cost-prohibitive because the fees were the same, whether you flew a 747 or a Caravan."

In a January 8 letter to the DOT, Visalia Mayor Steve Nelsen wrote: "For many years now, the City Council has inquired with various carriers about the possibility of having service to our state capitol. Up until now, the Rates & Fees structure at SMF has been cost prohibitive. When the City was notified that SMF was now an option, our City Council was compelled to review the proposal...The City of Visalia appreciates the Essential Air Service program and the opportunities it offers the community to continue to have air service."

On December 11, 2014, the DOT issued an order selecting SeaPort Airlines as the carrier to provide air service to Visalia for the contract period of January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2016. SeaPort had proposed twice daily service to Burbank and Oakland, with the Burbank flights continuing on to San Diego. SeaPort currently provides service from El Centro to San Diego and Burbank, and they are excited to be growing their California markets. SeaPort currently has more than 15 Essential Air Service communities and boasts that they have never lost a community during the contract rebid process.

"When they started looking at opening up service, the question came again from our council members, and the rate structure had changed at that point, and it was actually something that they could do," Cifuentes said. "With Burbank and Sacramento service, those are two locations that Fresno doesn't have service to, they're complimentary."

Prior to the issuance of the order, SeaPort performed market analysis for Visalia and determined that it has historically been a market of business travelers, rather than leisure travelers. Sacramento, while still providing access to low-fare carriers such as Southwest and JetBlue, offers greater worldwide connectivity by providing travelers with access to all three of the major global alliances, SkyTeam, OneWorld, and Star Alliance.

For travelers not familiar with the new airline model of global alliances, Sacramento has both American and United Airlines, whereas Oakland does not. Customers that would most likely benefit from this access typically represent business travelers and therefore would help drive economic growth in the San Joaquin Valley. This connectivity and contribution to economic growth is consistent with the overall goals of the Essential Air Service program.

Where differences do exist in service levels, they are largely attributable to low-fare airlines at Oakland that provide varied service levels to leisure destinations and target price-sensitive customers. Some of these carriers, such as Spirit and Allegiant Air, offer less-than-daily schedules and/or very late night/early morning departure times (effectively "red-eye" flights). SeaPort believes such traffic would have comprised a very small percentage of the overall demand on the Visalia-Oakland sector.

Approval, while likely, is not automatic. Officials from both SeaPort and the Visalia airport authority believe that approval for Sacramento service will be forthcoming.

SeaPort indicated in a January 13 press release that the Department of Transportation signaled approval coming within the next few days.

"There's no telling what's going to happen at the federal level," said Cifuentes. "But, I hope so. I know that the DOT has confirmed receipt of both their order and our letter in support. They're still shooting for the 9th."

MHSA Fiscal Year 2013/2014 Plan Update Available for Public Review

The Tulare County HHSA, Department of Mental Health, as required under the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), is opening a public review and comment period for the MHSA 2013-2014 Integrated Plan Update which details Community Services and Supports (CSS), Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI), Workforce Education and Training (WET), Capital Facilities and Technology (CFT), and Innovation (INN) component updates.

The 30-day public review and comment period will begin __ January 9, 2015, and expires ___ February 9, 2015. A Public Hearing will be held on Tuesday, March 3, 2015, at 4:00pm at the Professional Development Center, 4031 West Noble Avenue Visalia, CA 93277.

The document under review will be posted on the web site at http://www.tchhsa.org/ under spotlight. Any member of the public may request a hard copy of the document by contacting the Tulare County HHSA Mental Health Department at (559) 624-7458.

To provide input, recommendations and comments, please email your comments to:

MHart@tularehhsa.org.

Submit written comments to:

Tulare County HHSA
Michael Hart Mental Health Dept.
5957 S. Mooney Blvd.
Visalia, CA 93277

Office of the District Attorney Hires First Female Chief Investigator

Staff Reports

Tulare County District Attorney Tim Ward has selected Lindy Gligorijevic as his new Chief Investigator of the Bureau of Investigations.

Chief Gligorijevic has been an investigator and assistant chief with the Office of the District Attorney for seven years.

She began her law enforcement career with the Los Angeles Police Department in 1985. Her experience ranges from patrol in Hollywood, Rampart, and the 77th Divisions to rising to the rank of Detective III, investigating homicides, sex crimes and robberies.

Gligorijevic taught homicide crime scene investigations for the Robert Presley Institute of Criminal Investigations for ten years, and brings a commitment of continuous improvement in professional training for law enforcement personnel.

The Office of the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigations is comprised of 80 sworn and civilian personnel. It is the third largest law enforcement agency in Tulare County.

Linda Gligorijevic

The duties of the 46 sworn criminal investigators range from investigating child abuse to homicide, from political corruption to fraud. They provide training for local law enforcement and have a wide variety of community outreach duties. They reach out to businesses and community organizations to reduce crime and increase public safety by investigating workers' compensation fraud, elder abuse, community scams, and many other types of crime.

Moving forward in 2015, Ward sees Gligorijevic as a key component in his continued commitment to protect and care for victims of crime.

"I'm pleased to have Chief Gligorijevic lead the Bureau," he said. "She is highly qualified and is the best person to lead our dedicated group of law enforcement professionals."

"There is no greater responsibility than to protect and serve our community. The Bureau of Investigations is comprised of outstanding criminal investigators and professional staff. It is an honor to lead them and it is a privilege to work for District Attorney Ward," said Gligorijevic.

"My husband and I are life-long California residents and are so happy to be living, now, in the best region in the state, although I could do without the rattlesnakes," she stated.

She and her husband, a retired Los Angeles City Fire Captain, live in Elderwood with their two standard poodles.

Council

Continued from p. 1

seeks to appeal a planning commission decision they would have to pay a $467 fee and then recuse themselves from voting the appeal. Two; the council could adopt the 2007 ordinance that allows city council members to appeal planning commission decisions concerning project maps, and conditional use permits, if they were approved in conjunction with a map. The third choice was to allow the city council to appeal any decision by the planning commission.

Peltzer pointed out that any changes to the general plan or zoning voted on by the planning commission must be approved by the city council. Most other votes taken by the planning commission are final unless a citizen files an appeal.

During the three and a half years from 2007-2010, when the council could appeal a decision based on project maps, Collins did so twice. One appeal was a multi-family residential development, while the second concerned a neighborhood retail development on Demaree and Goshen. Both appeals failed.

In 2010, a vote was taken to restrict the ability of the city council to appeal planning commission decisions on project maps. The city council voted that if a council member wanted to appeal a planning commission decision they had to pay a fee and recuse themselves from voting on the appeal. This was consistent with what the public is required to do if wishing to appeal a planning commission decision. Mayor Nelsen said he felt that city council members should not be given preferential treatment over the public when appealing a decision. He also felt that the council should not be second-guessing the planning commission.

Collins inquired what would happen if the planning commission made a decision that is inconsistent with a community in question or makes a decision that gets the city into "hot water."

"Do we just hope we don't get sued?" said Collins.

Peltzer responded that attorneys advise the planning commission and legal assistance is available at all planning commission meetings, so that Visalia cannot get sued.

Shuklian said her concern was that when her constituents call she wants to be accountable for any decision made by the city. She felt like she was elected to make these decisions and supported option three.

Collins agreed with Shuklian, that "the buck stops here with the council." How a development is managed and how it holds up over time is up to the city council. Collins expressed his support for option number two.

Councilmember Link disagreed with Collins and Shuklian. He said, the city staff reports any inconsistencies between the development and general plan to the planning commission before a vote is taken.

"The planning commission members are very knowledgeable about the different communities," Link said.

He also said, developers will see this as one more step in the process of getting their development approved and it may discourage them from building in Visalia. Link pointed out that Visalia may have a new council in four years and one of them may pull all decisions. He supported the status quo.

Gubler originally voted for the 2010 restrictions, but "was weighing both sides." He said, he felt option number three would open the floodgates and was too broad. He said, he did see the need for council members being able to appeal planning commission decisions, citing the recently approved development at Plaza Drive. Though zoned as Business Research Park, Gubler said he was having a hard time wrapping his head around the fact that a small residential development would be built.

"I still think that's not what the city wanted to do out there," he said.

For this reason, and the fact there were only two appeals during a three-year time period, he was leaning towards repealing the 2010 ordinance. Gubler also added that the development community had not called, so maybe it did not view this as a problem.

"They have been completely silent on the issue," he said.

Nelsen supported upholding the 2010 ordinance. He said he believed that in second-guessing the planning commission the city council can make mistakes. Both he and Link indicated that, with a new council in four years, any single member might file several appeals on a whim or do so because of some personal vendetta.

Nelsen stated that repealing the restrictions will create uncertainty in the development community. The developer will have to hold their breath every time they get a decision from the planning commission, waiting to see if a council member will appeal. The developers do not want to deal with this extra step, not least because it costs them money.

"The City of Porterville does not have a planning commission and I will leave it at that," said Nelsen. "We have a system that has been proven over time. The citizens are happy and the developers are happy. A council member trigger slows the process down and effectively delays the decision-making process."

Even though Nelsen commended Collins on how he conducted his appeals, Collins objected to Nelsen's use of the word whim.

"Taking out an appeal is policy-based; it doesn't happen on a whim. There are checks and balances in our system and we are the executive arm," Collins said.

Collins added, it is the council that ensures that the planning commission is on the right track in terms of policy decisions, "which is not whimsical."

Nelsen responded, the planning commission takes policy to heart when it make its decisions, and if the city council insists on continually second-guessing it, "then why have a planning commission?"

Nelsen and Link's argument about the uncertainty of future councils was unsuccessful in getting Shuklian and Collins to think outside the now. Whereas Collins has a long career in city planning and brings legitimate concerns to his appeals, it is extremely naïve for the two of them to believe this will always be the case, they said.

After the debate, Link motioned to maintain the restrictions which failed, 3-2. Shuklian then motioned to adopt the second choice that allows council members to appeal when the decision involves a project map. That motion passed 3-2. The ordinance needs two additional reading before it can be made official. During those readings, the ordinance can be adjusted or rejected altogether. Dates have not been set for those readings.

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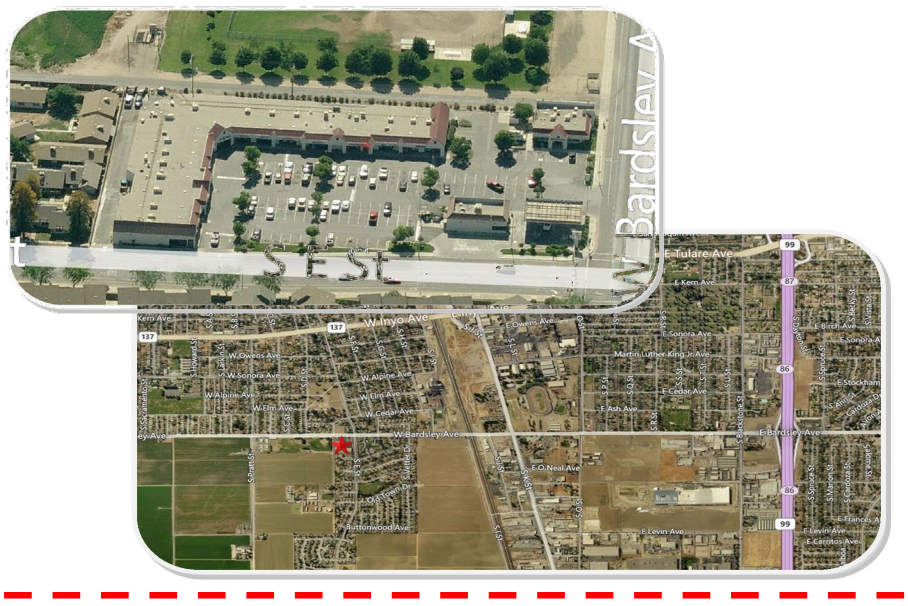

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Assemblyman Devon Mathis Comments on Gov. Brown's Inaugural and New Budget

Staff Reports

Governor Jerry Brown unveiled his 2015/2016 budget proposal at the state capitol last week. Brown will need to work with the state assembly and senate to get the final budget passed, hopefully in June. Because Democrats hold a majority in both houses he does not need Republican votes. But if the budget calls for any tax increases he will need Republican support because an increase in taxes or fees takes a two-thirds majority in the legislature. Republicans are pleased that Brown is resisting pressure from his own party to spend the states' surplus. Brown has instead focused on putting money in the rainy day fund and paying down the "wall of debt."

Recently elected Assemblyman Devon Mathis put out a statement after Brown released his proposed budget.

"Governor Jerry Brown released his 2015-2016 State budget today. During his press conference unveiling the $164.7 billion budget plan, the Governor called for fiscal prudence and the importance of paying down State debt, investing wisely and saving.

"I applaud the Governors focus on getting the State's fiscal house in order. It is too tempting to spend money when times appear good and we have seen the legislature too many times spend any reserves that we may build up," stated Assemblyman Mathis.

Devon Mathis

"The Governor's leadership on maintaining a balanced budget and rejecting unnecessary spending is critical. I look forward to working with him, and my colleagues in the Legislature, on being fiscally prudent in our decisions, recognizing that we are still in a drought that must be addressed," said Mathis.

In November, the people of California approved Proposition 1, a $2.7 billion dollar bond measure dedicated to improving California's aging and inadequate water supply system. However, the Governor's budget, as proposed today, spends only $532 million of that bond money and of that only $3 million is for storage. In comparison over $1 billion in the spending plan is dedicated to high-speed rail.

"California is still, despite our recent rains, in one of the worst droughts in our history. There are parts of my district, such as East Porterville, that have literally run out of water" said Mathis. "At this time of crisis our priorities must be on increasing storage, and getting water to the people of California not on boondoggles like the high-speed rail project. That is the fiscally sound thing to do" stated Mathis.

Assemblyman Mathis, who built a consensus among all voters in his surprise election, called for the same approach in the legislature and with the Governor.

"It is time to put petty politics aside and work together, not as Republican and Democrats but as Californian's to continue to put our house in order, focus on solving the real needs of our state and make the bold long-term investments in critical infrastructure that a 21st century economy demands. Putting the people of the state first, I am confident that we can come to broad consensus on many of these common sense issues" concluded Mathis.

Earlier in the week Assemblyman Devon Mathis Commented on Governor Brown's Historic 4th Inauguration and State of State Address.

"I'd like to congratulate the Governor on his 4th term. This is a historic achievement and I look forward to working together to better the lives of California's families. However, it is important to note that the Governor's budget will come out later this week and will show everyone where his priorities lay," stated Mathis.

Assemblyman Mathis represents the people of Tulare, Inyo and Kern counties and serves as Vice Chair of the Veteran Affairs Committee and is a Member of Aging and Long-Term Care, Agriculture, and Water, Parks and Wildlife Committees."

Crossroads Tour to Stop Fracking Began January 12 in San Diego

Staff Reports

Thousands of Californians will convene over the next week as part of the California Crossroads Tour calling on Governor Jerry Brown to ban fracking, stand up to Big Oil, and move California beyond fossil fuels to 100% renewable energy.

"California is at a crossroads. Our governor and our elected officials need to decide if we're going to be a real leader on climate change, or if we will continue to allow fracking and other dangerous extraction methods that put our communities and environment at risk," said David Braun of Californians Against Fracking, an organizer of the tour. "Californians around the state are affected by the oil industry in different ways—whether they are exposed to dangerous toxins from living near a drilling site or have potentially explosive trains rumbling through their neighborhoods carrying crude oil—but we all stand to lose if we continue to ignore warnings that spell out doom if we don't put an end to the use of fossil fuels."

Leaders from Californians Against Fracking are traveling to eight cities over nine days as a part of the California Crossroads Tour, designed as an opportunity for community members and experts to speak out against the negative health and environmental impacts of high-risk oil drilling, wastewater injection into deep disposal wells, and the prospect of a dramatic increase of oil by rail. The tour began on January 12 at the King Chavez High School auditorium in San Diego and will stop in Los Angeles, Oxnard, Santa Barbara, Delano, San Juan Bautista and Oakland. It will culminate January 20 at Sacramento, where residents will deliver messages from communities across the state to the governor.

In California, communities facing the threat of fracking are taking actions to protect themselves. Last year Santa Cruz and Mendocino counties joined the city of Beverly Hills in passing measures to ban fracking and similar oil extraction techniques. San Benito County voters also approved a fracking ban with a 59% majority, despite a $2 million opposition campaign by the oil industry. The City of Los Angeles is considering a ban, and two cities in Los Angeles County—La Habra Heights and Hermosa Beach—are slated to vote on fracking and oil projects in March.

The tour will be followed up by the February 7 March for Real Climate Leadership in Oakland, which will be hosted by a broad group of partner organizations and will bring thousands of people from across the state into the streets of Oakland to call on Brown to ban fracking. More information is available at marchforclimateleadership.org.

Californians Against Fracking is a coalition of about 200 environmental business, health, agriculture, labor, political and environmental justice organizations working to win a statewide ban on fracking in California.

Tulare County Board of Supervisors Hires New County Librarian

Staff Reports

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors has hired Darla Wegener of Signal Hill, California, as the new County Librarian. Wegener replaces Interim County Librarian Mike Drake, who was appointed to the position in November following the October 3 resignation of previous library director, Jeff Scott.

Wegener, who will be relocating from Southern California, has worked in library services for the past 14 years.

Darla Wegener

She has served as a librarian for Santa Clara County and the City of Lincoln. Her most recent position as library manager was for the City of Long Beach.

"With her experience in the field, Ms. Wegener will bring significant knowledge to the county's library system," said Chairman of the Board of Supervisors Steve Worthley. "Ms. Wegener will be a great asset and we look forward to having her be a part of our Tulare County family."

As county librarian, Wegener will be responsible for all aspects of the Tulare County Public Library's programs and services, including the review and management of the library's $5 million annual budget.

High on the list of program priorities is a commitment to maintaining and growing the "READ TO SUCCEED" Adult Literacy Program, which provides one-on-one tutoring services and conversation circles at the Literacy Center. The librarian also directly supervises the deputy county librarian, literacy coordinator and department Secretary, as well as indirectly supervising a library staff of 40 dispersed across all 15 library branches.

"I am excited to be the next Tulare County librarian," said Wegener.

"The work the county and library does with the community is exemplary and I plan to continue that work and do even more. I look forward to learning about Tulare County, the library and the community."

Wegener earned a Bachelor of Arts in Child Development from California State University, Los Angeles and a Master in Library and Information Science from San Jose State University. She also holds a Certificate in Management/Supervision from Mission College in Santa Clara, and a Certificate in Public Library Administration from the American Library Association/Allied Professional Association.

Wegener will start work with the County of Tulare on February 9 and will earn $110,000 annually.

Viewpoint

Ten Questions for Conservatives

Lawrence S. Wittner

Now that the Republican Party—the conservative voice in mainstream U.S. electoral politics—has attained the most thoroughgoing control of Congress that it has enjoyed since 1928, it's an appropriate time to take a good look at modern conservatism.

Conservatives have performed some useful services for Americans over the course of U.S. history. Alexander Hamilton placed the nation's financial credit on a much firmer basis during the late eighteenth century. Determined to make knowledge available to all Americans, Andrew Carnegie funded the development of the free U.S. public library system in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the early twentieth century, Elihu Root and other conservatives played key roles in the establishment of international law. Also, in the mid-twentieth century, Robert Taft staunchly denounced the peacetime military draft, arguing that it smacked of a totalitarian state.

But, increasingly, modern American conservatism resembles a giant wrecking ball, powered by hate-spewing demagogues to undermine or destroy long-cherished institutions, from the U.S. Post Office (established by Benjamin Franklin in 1775 and enshrined in the U.S. Constitution) to minimum wage laws (which began to appear on the state level in the early twentieth century). Sadly, the rhetoric of modern conservatism—focused on small government, free enterprise, and individual liberty—seems ever more divorced from its behavior. Indeed, conservatism's rhetoric and its behavior are often quite contradictory.

Is this allegation fair? There certainly seem to be plenty of discrepancies between words and deeds, and conservatives should be asked to explain them. For example:

1. As opponents of "big government," why do you fervently support an unending stream of government-sponsored wars, vast government military spending, the power of local police to shoot and kill unarmed citizens, government interference with abortion rights and family planning, government restrictions on marriage, and the linkage of church and state?
2. As advocates of "consumer sovereignty," why do you oppose requiring corporations to label their products with information (for example, "contains GMOs") that would enable consumers to make an intelligent choice of products?
3. As advocates of personal advancement through individual effort, why do you oppose inheritance taxes that would place the children of rich and poor on a more equal footing in their struggle for personal success?
4. As advocates of capitalist competition in the marketplace, why do you so consistently support the interests of giant corporations over those of small businesses?
5. As advocates of the "private enterprise system," why do you so often favor government subsidies to failing big businesses and tax breaks to thriving big businesses that you desire to lure into your state or region?
6. As advocates of freedom to choose to work for an employer ("freedom of contract"), why do you oppose employees' right to stop working for that employer—that is, to strike—and particularly to strike against the government?
7. As advocates of voluntary (rather than government) action to redress grievances, why do you so fervently oppose labor unions?
8. As advocates of the free movement of labor and capital, why do you support government immigration restrictions, including the construction of enormous walls, the massive policing of borders, and the building of mass incarceration centers?
9. As critics of statism, why don't you oppose government loyalty oaths, flag drills, and pledges of allegiance?
10. As advocates of "freedom," why are you not at the forefront of the fight against government torture, political surveillance, and censorship?

If these contradictions can't be explained satisfactorily, then we have good reason to conclude that the professed principles of conservatives are no more than a respectable mask behind which lurk less admirable motives—for example, that support for wars and military spending reflects a desire to dominate the world and its resources, that support for police shoot-to-kill policies and crackdowns on immigrants reflects hostility toward racial minorities, that opposition to abortion rights and family planning reflects hostility toward women, that support for government meddling in religious matters reflects hostility toward religious minorities and nonbelievers, that opposition to product labeling, indifference to small businesses, subsidies to big businesses, and opposition to strikes and unions reflect a loyalty to corporations, that opposition to inheritance taxes reflects an alliance with the wealthy, and that support for nationalist hoopla, torture, surveillance, and censorship reflects a repressive, authoritarian mentality. In short, that the real goal of conservatives is the maintenance of economic, gender, racial, and religious privilege, with no scruples about the means of maintaining it.

Actions, of course, speak louder than words, and we will undoubtedly get a good idea of where conservatives stand from the legislation passed by the incoming Republican-dominated Congress. Meanwhile, however, it would be interesting to have conservatives explain these ten contradictions between their professed principles and their behavior.

Climate Change Challenges: U.S. Military Might Hold Key

Kathy Kelly

Having lived through the 1991 Desert Storm bombing and the 2003 Shock and Awe bombing in Iraq, I tread carefully when speaking about any danger greater than war that children in our world might face. I won't forget children in Baghdadi hospitals whose bodies I have seen, wounded and maimed, after bombing campaigns ordered by U.S. leaders. I think also of children in Lebanon and Gaza and Afghanistan, children I've sat with in cities under heavy bombardments while their frightened parents tried to distract and calm them.

Even so, it seems the greatest danger – the greatest violence – that any of us face is contained in our attacks on our environment. Today's children and generations to follow them face nightmares of scarcity, disease, mass displacement, social chaos, and war, due to our patterns of consumption and pollution.

Ironically, one of the institutions in U.S. society which comprehends the disasters that loom is the U.S. military.

In the past few years, the Pentagon has issued several reports that concur that the greatest threat to U.S. national security is posed by climate change and potential environmental disasters. The reports show concern about how droughts, famines and natural disasters could cause conflicts leading to "food and water shortages, diseases, disputes over refugees and resources and destruction by natural disasters in regions across the globe."

The reports don't acknowledge that the U.S. military has commandeered vast resources, in terms of money and scientific "know-how," that are acutely needed for use in solving our global crisis. These resources are steadily directed toward developing more weapons and fighting more wars.

What's more, the U.S. military, with its more than 7,000 bases, installations, and other facilities, worldwide, is one of the most egregious polluters on the planet and is the world's largest single consumer of fossil fuels.

Its terrible legacy of forcing its own soldiers and their families, over decades, to drink lethally carcinogenic water on bases that should have been evacuated as contaminated sites is covered in a recent Newsweek story.

Civilians drinking from wells around hundreds of U.S. military bases abroad can fare little better.

In January of 2004, I visited a former Iraqi Air Defense Camp in Baghdad. Following the US led invasion of Iraq, at least 400 families moved into this camp. It became one of several similar vacated and bombed areas that were "squatted" by desperate people who preferred eking out an existence amid the wreckage to whatever misery they had left behind.

The children in the camp were among the most endearing human beings I have ever encountered. They were shy, but smiling, friendly, and incredibly well behaved. The collapsed buildings and mounds of debris didn't seem to faze them, any more than the rusted tubes of the missiles that had collapsed the buildings. Several of these little builders worked industriously atop hills of rubble, their tiny hands digging for intact bricks. They would bring the bricks to their parents who used them to build new housing walls.

At least a dozen of the children had large red spots covering their faces. It could be that they had been bitten by fleas or suffered from scabies. But we couldn't help but wonder if they had been affected by contaminants from the bomb parts. A proper needs assessment of this new housing area should have been undertaken right away. The new "householders" needed access to clean water, medical care, a clinic and a school. They needed peace.

The world needs peace in order to address catastrophic changes that are fast approaching us. Yet, the U.S. public is seldom encouraged to link actual security with cooperative, diplomatic efforts to promote fair exchanges of resources.

Consider, for example, the U.S. military's Asia Pivot strategy, which aims to encircle China with military bases and threaten China's ability to import and export resources. Any rational plan for changing human consumption and pollution patterns should surely view China as a foremost global partner in devising new ways to halt global warming and negotiate fairly over consumption of resources.

The Asia Pivot plan instead reflects U.S. insistence on competing with China by controlling the pricing and flow of valuable minerals and fossil fuels found in the region. It also seems to motivate U.S. determination to maintain at least nine U.S. military bases in Afghanistan, all the while insisting that the U.S. must have complete legal immunity against any Afghan government claims that the U.S. military has poisoned Afghan air, soil, or water.

To "market" such a plan, U.S. politicians and military planners must encourage the U.S. public to feel fearful and competitive. Our fears and the longing for comfort, for status, which drives our consumption, blend seamlessly, one into the other. We want all the wealth, and we want all the security.

Huddled over candles in the terrifying nights of the U.S. "Shock and Awe" war to "liberate" Iraq, shuddering from the thudding roar of the war exploding around us, my companions and I had talked about how we must work, in the future, not only to help rebuild Iraq but, even more crucially, to rebuild ourselves, our way of life.

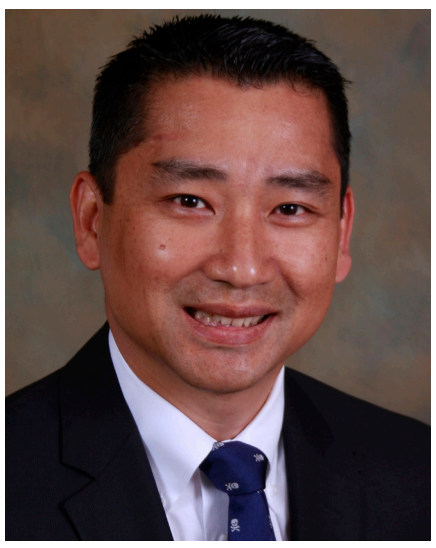
We wouldn't try to live forever at the expense of neglecting or killing our neighbors, including their children. We would find ways to prevent a shockingly undemocratic U.S. from maintaining a vast military machine in constant short-term pursuit of either our exclusive wealth or our exclusive security. Guided by the earnest resolve of the hopeful children moving one brick at a time amid the rubble, we'd work to build and be a better world.

Kathy Kelly (Kathy@vcnv.org) is distributed by PeaceVoice and co-coordinates Voices for Creative Nonviolence (www.vcnv.org).

Kaweah Delta Set to Host January 28 'Ask the Experts' Facebook Chat

Staff Reports

Kaweah Delta Health Care District will host a live Facebook chat on Wednesday, Jan. 28, to answer the community's questions about athletic knee injuries.



Dr. Bruce Le, orthopedic surgeon.

The Facebook chat will take place from 6-7 p.m. on Kaweah Delta's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/kaweahdelta and will feature Dr. Bruce Le, an orthopedic surgeon, seeing patients at Orthopaedic Associates, 820 S. Akers, Suite 220, Visalia.

Anyone who would like to submit their question in advance, can do so in the following ways:

- Visit www.kaweahdelta.org, click on "Contact Us" and fill out the form
- E-mail marketstaff@kdhcd.org
- Post questions on Kaweah Delta's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/kaweahdelta

Dr. Le has a board certification from the American Osteopathic Board of Orthopedic Surgery/Orthopaedic Surgery. He completed his residency at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and a fellowship at Hughston Sports Medical Clinic in Columbus, Georgia.

Established in 1963, Kaweah Delta Health Care District is the only facility with Magnet status in the San Joaquin Valley serving children and adults and is the only trauma center between Fresno and Bakersfield.

The district offers a comprehensive scope of services including everything from a well-respected pediatric hospitalist program to nationally-recognized orthopedic and cancer programs. For more information, visit www.kaweahdelta.org or follow Kaweah Delta on Twitter and Facebook.

Guilty Pleas in Fraudulent Foreclosure Scheme

Staff Reports

The United States Attorney for the Eastern District has obtained guilty pleas from two men in connection with a foreclosure rescue scheme, which resulted in more than $2.5 million in losses to Valley homeowners.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Office of the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigations.

Juan Ramon Curiel, 36, of Visalia, and his co-defendant and business partner, Santiago Palacios-Hernandez, 45, of Salinas, pled guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud and bankruptcy fraud in connection with a foreclosure rescue scheme they orchestrated. Curiel and Palacios-Hernandez operated Star Reliable Mortgage, with offices in Bakersfield, Visalia and Salinas.

Between August 2010 and October 2011, they conspired to defraud more than 200 homeowners and lenders by offering clients a "loan elimination" program that purported to allow homeowners in financial difficulty to own their homes "free and clear" of any loans or mortgages. They charged clients up-front fees ranging from $2,500 up to $4,500, as well as additional monthly fees. They told their clients to stop paying their mortgages and then filed various fraudulent documents at county recorders' offices on behalf of the clients. Both men will be sentenced later this year.

This case illustrates the caution that homeowners should take when consulting with businesses that offer foreclosure services. If you are told not to make your house payment because someone else will, or, if you are asked for any fees upfront, call the Office of the District Attorney at 623-0250.

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Denny Sysaknoi. Photo/Lexey Swall

New Campaign Shows How Climate Change Laws Help Disadvantaged Communities

Staff Reports

The Greenlining Institute has launched a new campaign to highlight how California's climate change and clean energy laws bring jobs and consumer savings to communities of color and low-income neighborhoods across California, even as they fight smog and promote health. Centerpiece of the new campaign is a just-launched website, UpLiftCA.org, with the tagline, "Our Air. Our Jobs. Our Neighborhoods."

At the heart of UpLiftCA.org are stories of real Californians already benefitting from the state's exploding clean energy economy – people like 21-year-old Denny Sisaknoi of Fresno, who escaped a slide into crime and gang involvement (his brother has been in prison since age 15) and built a new life and career as a solar installer, and the Ramirezes, a low-income Madera family that recently got solar power. The story bank will grow over the coming months, and a Spanish language version of the site will launch this month.

"As has been widely reported, the oil lobby and its front groups have attacked California's laws to fight global warming, masquerading as consumer advocates and supporters of low-income Californians," said Greenlining Institute Executive Director Orson Aguilar. "We're going to make sure our communities hear the truth."

Thanks to AB 32, California's climate change and clean energy law, and follow-up legislation called SB 535, one quarter of the money raised by sales of carbon permits under California's cap-and-trade program must go to projects that benefit highly polluted and economically challenged communities. For the current fiscal year, that amounts to $272 million for priorities such as clean energy, energy efficiency, clean transportation, urban forestry and affordable housing near public transit.

"California is doing something incredibly forward-thinking," said Leonard Robinson, chair of the California Black Chamber of Commerce Energy and Environment Committee and former chief deputy director of the Cal/EPA Department of Toxic Substances in the Schwarzenegger administration. "Part of the fees that companies are charged for putting greenhouse gases into the air are being invested in California's most vulnerable and underserved communities to improve health and create local jobs. These jobs are real – California added over 3,500 solar power jobs last year alone."

More jobs will be coming soon as funding begins to flow. Just before Thanksgiving, the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) announced a series of grants to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from solid waste disposal, projects that will bring new jobs and cleaner air to places like Tulare, Fresno, Perris and Oakland.

In addition to real-world stories of clean energy policy in action, UpLiftCA.org features clear, plain-English explanations of how the laws work and how they will cut smog, protect health and generate jobs as they fight global warming. It also includes practical information for individuals and business owners seeking assistance and information regarding energy efficiency, low-cost solar power, rebates for plug-in electric vehicles, and much more.

"For too many decades, low income neighborhoods and communities of color were used as toxic dumping grounds," said Greenlining Environmental Equity Director Vien Truong. "This is a huge chance to right a historical wrong and bring real benefits to our communities, and community advocates are working closely with the state to make sure these benefits are real and get to where they need to go."

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Rawhide To Hold Job Fair February 14th

Staff Reports

If you've always wanted to work at a ballpark, now's your chance...the Rawhide are searching for friendly, customer-oriented people in need of a summer job!

The Rawhide will hold their annual job fair at Rawhide Ballpark (300 N. Giddings Street in Visalia) on Saturday, February 14th, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Positions are available in a variety of areas, including concessions, food preparation, retail, and ushering.

Last year, 120 Tulare and Kings County residents earned jobs out of over 600 applicants, and received valuable experience in the customer service industry.

"To make this another successful year, we are excited to bring back & also hire new members into our Rawhide Family," said Event Coordinator Lauren Lopes. "We look for those who are positive, friendly, and put our fans' experience first."

Rawhide General Manager Jennifer Pendergraft also stressed the importance of a friendly gameday staff. "Everyone who works here is responsible for the experience our fans have at Rawhide Ballpark," Pendergraft said. "The fan experience during Rawhide games is among the best in all of professional baseball, and our gameday staff has a tremendous hand in that."

The Rawhide season consists of 70 home games over the course of five months, beginning in early April and ending in early September.

For a head start in applying, prospective staff members are encouraged to pre-register at RawhideBaseball.com. To pre-register, complete the application located on the homepage and return to the ticket office on Giddings St. You may also scan and email your application to jobfair@rawhidebaseball.com or fax back to (559) 739-7732, ATTENTION: JOB FAIR. Come to the job fair prepared with a copy of your completed application and resume.

Plenty of free parking is available at the City of Visalia parking lot at Giddings and Center Streets, just a half-block from the main ballpark entrance.

New Laws for State Motorists to Start in 2015

Marie Montgomery Nordhues

In 2014, the California State Legislature approved a number of new laws of interest to motorists, according to the Automobile Club of Southern California.

Carpool Lane Stickers.

AB 2013, which went into effect January 1, increases the number of advanced-technology partial zero-emission vehicles that are allowed to use carpool (or "HOV," high-occupancy vehicle) lanes from 55,000 to 70,000 without meeting HOV lane vehicle-occupancy requirements (generally two or three people per car). Vehicles eligible for these "green stickers" include plug-in hybrid vehicles, such as the Chevy Volt, Ford Fusion Energi and Toyota Prius Plug-In. A complete list of eligible vehicles can be found on the California Air Resources Board website, arb.ca.gov/msprog/carpool/carpool.htm.

Ridesharing Services.

Assembly Bill 2293 requires that "transportation network companies," such as Uber and Lyft, and their drivers buy insurance to cover themselves when they are transporting passengers and when drivers are logged on to their computer dispatching program and ready to accept riders. The Auto Club supported the law to ensure protection for passengers and other road users because most personal auto insurance policies do not cover drivers engaged in a ridesharing business. The new requirement takes effect July 1, 2015.

Road Funding.

Senate Bill 1077 requires the California Transportation Commission to create a "road usage charge" technical committee. The group will develop a pilot program to explore charging motorists based on the distance they drive rather than on the amount of gasoline they purchase. The current tax on motor vehicle fuels pays for road construction and maintenance, as well as some mass transit projects. However, as vehicles become more fuel-efficient and motorists turn to electric and other alternatively fueled vehicles, fuel-tax revenues cannot keep up with needed road and other transportation improvements.

A number of states are studying possible new funding mechanisms, such as charging per mile instead of per gallon.

The Auto Club has recommended that the new committee consider how mileage information would be collected, how privacy concerns may be addressed, the cost of implementing a new system, how much to charge motorists, and how to spend the money collected.

The Auto Club will seek participation on the committee. The pilot program must be implemented and completed by January 1, 2017, with an evaluation study to be done by June 30, 2018.

For questions and comments on these issues, email the Auto Club's government affairs office at roadahead@aaa-calif.com.

Marie Montgomery Nordhues handles corporate communications for the Automobile Club of Southern California.

Visalia Unified Sets Public Meetings to Review School Boundary Changes

Staff Reports

Families will have the opportunity to learn about and offe input into proposed changes to attendance boundaries for Visalia Unified School District's middle and high schools.

To gather community input, VUSD will host a series of informational meetings in January and February. Maps will be provided and Board of Trustees members and staff will be available to answer questions.

The schedule of meetings is:

- Jan. 21, 6 p.m. La Joya cafeteria/multi-purpose room
- Feb. 3, 6 p.m. Valley Oak, cafeteria/multi-purpose room
- Feb. 4, 6 p.m. Divisadero, cafeteria/multi-purpose room
- Feb. 5, 6 p.m. Green Acres, cafeteria/multi-purpose room

Guiding principles that the Board will consider include socioeconomic and English language learner equity; maintenance of existing "feeder patterns" so that students remain in their existing "feeder" group; maintenance of existing neighborhoods; transportation impacts; and the desire to minimize the number of schools and students impacted by boundary adjustments.

The changes are prompted by the opening of the new middle school and adjustments will coincide with the August 2016 opening of the new campus.

The goal is to balance the existing four middle schools with the new middle school and then to also balance the middle schools with the four comprehensive high schools.

For information, contact Robert Groeber, Visalia Unified School District, at 730-7529.

Kings and Tulare Counties 7th Annual Project Homeless Connect Provides Needed Services

Staff Reports

Over 1,000 people are estimated to be served at the 7th annual Project Homeless Connect (PHC), a one-day, one-stop event offering services, housing, and hospitality to those experiencing homelessness.

A wide array of free services are provided for homeless individuals and families as well as those who are at risk of homelessness. Services include medical, dental, and eye care; housing services; DMV ID cards; birth certificates; haircuts; hot meals; family support services; and veteran support services.

The following locations are holding PHC events simultaneously on Thursday, January 29, 2015:

- Hanford: Pentecostal Church of God; 323 E. 11th St.
- Porterville: Comision Honorifica Building; 466 E. Putnam Ave.
- Tulare: TDES Hall; 515 N. H St.
- Visalia: Veteran's Memorial Building; 609 W. Center Ave.

Event organizers are asking for the community's support to serve the more than 1,000 people who will seek help there.

PHC depends on donations and volunteers to fulfill various duties throughout the day at all four venues. Positions include greeters, intake and check-in volunteers, hospitality volunteers, meal service, and set-up and break-down volunteers. Morning and afternoon volunteer shifts are available. People interested in volunteering can call 559-326-2122, or visit http://kingstularecoc.org/projects/2015-phc-event/ for details on venue-specific registration.

Event organizers are also seeking optometrists, veterinarians, and other services providers to provide services at the event.

Donations of sleeping bags, blankets, tents, tarps, reading glasses, dog food, and plus size warm clothing (men's and women's) are needed for distribution at the event.

Partners in this event include: Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency, Kaweah Delta Health Care District, Family Healthcare Network, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Kings View, Valley Oak SPCA, U.S. Social Security Administration, Tulare County Office of Education, Tulare County Adult Protective Services, Kings/Tulare Area Agency on Aging, Central Valley Recovery Services, Visalia City Coach, West Coast Believers, Turning Point, Tulare County Veterans Services, Veterans Field Van, VASH Program, and Dr. Jerry Yasuda.

For more information about PHC, call Machael Smith at 559-326-2122, or visit http://kingstularecoc.org/projects/2015-phc-event/.

Cooking on the Fly: Learn What to Do When There's More Month than Meals

Staff Reports

On January 28, the Tulare County Library will hold Cooking on the Fly, a presentation on what can be done when the pantry holds little but staples and there's no time or money to shop for food.

Canned goods, dry pasta, or beans can be "spiced up" to provide a hearty and nutritious meal, and "improv cooking" can create some new, delicious dishes the whole family will enjoy.

Visit the Visalia branch of the Tulare County Library on Wednesday, January 28, at 6:30pm for tips and tricks on how to cook with what's on hand. Families are welcome!

This presentation is part of the ongoing Stretching the Food Dollar project at the library. The series of programs is supported by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian, in partnership with the UC Co-Op Extension.

For more information on Cooking on the Fly, or other Stretching the Food Dollar presentations, call the Visalia Reference Desk at (559) 713-2703.

Animal Control

Continued from p. 1

shopping carts on family shopping trips, and goes to work with the family.

"We'd be robbed if someone tried to break in and Clyde was guarding the house," said Jones.

The dog has no prior incidents of vicious behavior or of biting. The county and the child's mother disagree. The county wants to put the dog down and the 18 month-old child's mother is fighting for full custody of her son. The child's mother and father are not married and do not live together.

There have been three hearings concerning Clyde's fate. Jones had an opportunity at the first hearing to present pictures and evidence proving the dog was not a menace. She felt that she got a fair hearing and that the officer would be impartial. That hearing was invalidated by county council before a decision was rendered.

At a second hearing, it was determined that the dog was a menace to society and the dog was ordered to be euthanized. Jones appealed the case. In the event that Jones had lost her appeal she would have five days to file papers with the Tulare County Superior Court to request a trial.

Before she received the decision on her appeal, on the morning of January 2, Deputy Young of the Tulare County Sheriff's Department and an off-duty animal control officer in uniform, Chris Carothers, showed up at the kennel to seize her dog, Jones said. The kennel is next door to her home.

Coincidently, this was at the exact same time that Sheriff Boudreaux was being sworn in outside the county courthouse, Jones said. Although the deputy and animal control officer did not have a court order to take the dog, the kennel owner felt obligated to hand Clyde over because the deputy told him to do so. When the kennel operator brought Clyde out on his leash, the dog thought everyone was there to see him and immediately started licking Carothers' hand. The dog was loaded into the animal control truck and taken to the TCAC facility in Visalia.

Jones telephoned the Sheriff's Department and asked who was assigned to go the kennel and collect Clyde. She was told that nobody was given such an assignment. She also discovered that Carothers was not scheduled to work at TCAC that day.

Jones, a 20- year employee of TCAC who worked at the Lindsay facility, is familiar with the rules and codes that need to be followed when owning a dog. In the process of dealing with TCAC concerning Clyde, she said that the staff knowingly disseminated incorrect information and threatened her

Jones characterized the staff as, "not doing the proper documentation, not following facility protocol, not following the law. They are corrupt and it has gotten worse." Basically, she said, they are "running rogue."

Jones retired from TCAC in 2009.

During a meeting with Tim Lutz, director of Fiscal Operations, Health and Human Services Agency, and TCAC supervisor, he apologized to Jones for TCAC staffs' behavior, she said. He told her, unfortunately, that HHSA has inherited their current staff and that the TCAC manager sometimes gets caught up in the drama going on out there, she said.

This is the second major incident to hit TCAC in the span of six weeks. It was reported in the November 10 Valley Voice that two former TCAC employees, retired USMC Major Paul Grenseman and Julia Jimenez, filed suit in Tulare County Superior Court against five Tulare County employees, including Lutz. The plaintiffs are suing the county for discrimination, racial/ethnic and sexual harassment, failure to prevent discrimination and failure to prevent harassment as well retaliation for objecting to, speaking out against, and complaining of illegal discrimination and harassment. That case is pending.

At press time the dog is still missing and a court case has been filed to save Clyde's life--if he is still alive. A court date is pending until it is determined if Jones qualifies for a waiver of the $435 filing fee. Jones said, she has all of the documentation to back up her case but cannot afford a lawyer.

County Seeks Help Locating Vicious Dog Removed from Animal Control

The Animal Control Unit of the Tulare County Health & Human Services (HHSA) is asking for help from residents in locating a vicious dog that was removed from Tulare County Animal Control quarantine. The dog is approximately four years old and is a tan and white unaltered male Pit Bull named Clyde.

Tulare County Animal Control Division received a report from Sierra View Hospital about a dog bite in the Porterville area on October 28, 2014. An approximately 18 month old child received facial lacerations from the attack. Due to the severity of the child's injuries, the Tulare County Sheriff's Department was called in to investigate the matter and take a bite report.

The morning after the attack, October 29, 2014, an Animal Control officer was dispatched to the residence of the owners of the dog involved in the incident.

The dog was placed in quarantine at a private kennel, pending the requested vicious animal hearing by both of the owners, per Tulare County Ordinance. At the hearing, held on December 4, 2014, the independent hearing officer determined that the dog is a dangerous animal and should be humanely euthanized. A request for an appeal hearing was subsequently filed and held on December 23, 2014. At that hearing, a second independent hearing officer upheld the original finding.

On Friday, January 2, 2015, with the assistance of Tulare County Sheriff's Officers, Animal Control went to the private kennel where the animal was under quarantine and took possession of the dog.

Sometime during the evening of January 4, or morning of January 5, someone cut the fences at the adjacent building and then broke into the Animal Control facility. They cut into the dog's kennel, took the animal, and at this time the dog's location remains unknown. No other animals were harmed or stolen and no other property was removed from the Animal Control facility.

The Tulare County Sheriff's Department is currently investigating the criminal aspect regarding the theft of the dog and the vandalism of the Tulare County Animal Control facility. Again, due to the severity of the attack on the child, the dog has been deemed a dangerous dog and a public health concern. Any resident who thinks they know the whereabouts of the animal is asked to contact the Tulare County Sheriff's Department. Residents can call (559) 733-6218, or give information and remain anonymous by accessing the TipNow page at tcso@tipnow.com; both can be accessed 24 hours a day.

HSR

Continued from p. 1

through the Central Valley is considered the spine of the project. The spine is where the Authority will be testing the new trains. The relatively flat and straight terrain presents the perfect conditions for this type of testing. To get to that point, four construction sections, or packages, need to be completed between Madera and Bakersfield. Building has already started on Construction Package (CP)1, which runs from Avenue 17 in Madera to American Way in Fresno. The contract for CP 2, running through Tulare and Kings Counties from Fresno to the Tulare-Kern county line, is expected to be awarded to Dragados/Flatiron/Shimmick, a Spanish-led consortium which submitted the lowest of three bids--$1.23 billion--to construct the 65-mile stretch of track.

After all the bridges, underpasses and tunnels are completed for the four CPs, CP 5 will begin. This the actual laying of the track, the first of which is expected to be laid sometime in 2018 or 2019.

It is possible that some of the electric trains could be built in California. A Request for Proposal will be put out in spring, and ten companies have already expressed an interest. A contract to build the trains should be awarded in 2016.

Before the formal ceremony began, a tour was given of the Fresno train station construction site where the old Del Monte Plant once stood. Dan Zack, Assistant Development Director of Fresno, reminded the audience that Fresno was founded as a railroad town. When the station is built, down town Fresno will be one of the hottest shopping, eating, and entertainment destinations within a hundred mile radius.

"When this new facility is built it will mean the rebirth of Fresno," he said.

A focal point of the tour was the demolition of the Del Monte plant that had been abandoned for 12 years. Paul Katchadourian, a small business owner with a contract doing demolition for HSR, pointed out that this was not the nice side of town. HSR will revitalize this neglected neighborhood in the heart of Fresno by transforming the entire area.

"Who knows what other industries will crop up because of HSR?" he said. "It's amazing that Fresno is the center of this huge project. Other parts of the state or the country usually get the federal dollars, not Fresno."

A confluence of factors apart from the HSR is transforming Fresno from being the state's punch line to becoming its rising star. The recently passed General Plan directs half of the development dollars into the urban core. Sixteen million dollars has already been allocated to open up Fulton Mall to traffic while keeping the shopping area an enjoyable pedestrian experience. Fulton Mall will become the gateway to the city, as it is only two blocks from the HSR Fresno train station. According to Zack, HSR will nicely tie together downtown, the bus transit system and the train station.

Dan Zack, Associate Development Director of Fresno, says the HSR facility will serve as a catalyst for the "rebirth of Fresno."

According to Dianna Gomez, Central Valley Regional Director for the HSR, this is not your grandmother's train station. It is envisioned to be designed like a campus, with a concourse spanning over the tracks. There will be several entrances to the campus along with shopping, eating and of course, trains. An area that is now considered city blight could end up becoming one of the hottest meeting hubs in the state. Projected opening of the Fresno Station is 2022, when the Merced to Burbank Airport line begins operation.

Zack predicts that, because of HSR, Fresno will become a destination town rather than just a transit location. He envisions tourists coming to Fresno to take advantage of the vibrant shopping, eating and entertainment scene all within walking distance of the station.

The economic benefits have already

HSR continued on **13 »**

Briefly...

Governor Proposes 'Carefully Balanced' Budget

On January 9, Governor Jerry Brown made public what he described as a "carefully balanced" budget plan for the 2015–16 fiscal year. The budget allocates portions of increased state revenues to schools and health care while holding firm on other areas--pumping billions of dollars more into schools and health care coverage, holding college tuition static and making good on Propositions 1 and 2 by investing in long overdue water projects and saving money, while continuing to chip away at the state's other long-term liabilities: debt, infrastructure, retiree health care and climate change.

"This budget," Brown said, "builds for the future by saving money, paying down debt and investing in our state's core needs."

Upon taking office in 2011, the State of California was staggering under a roughly $26.6 billion budget deficit and predicted yearly shortfalls of $20 billion. California has since eliminated these deficits with billions of dollars in cuts, an improving economy and new temporary revenue streams approved by voters.

Significantly, Brown's budget proposes to:

Invest in Water, Flood Protection and Combating Climate Change

The Budget includes the first $532 million in expenditures from the Proposition 1 water bond to continue the implementation of the Water Action Plan, the administration's five-year roadmap towards sustainable water management. Additionally, the Budget includes the last $1.1 billion in spending from the 2006 flood bond to bolster the state's protection from floods. It also proposes $1 billion in cap-and-trade expenditures for the state's continuing investments in low-carbon transportation, sustainable communities, energy efficiency, urban forests and high-speed rail. The successful implementation of these projects and continued and even steeper reductions in carbon pollutants are necessary to address the ongoing threat posed by climate change.

Implement Strengthened Rainy Day Fund and Pays Off Debt

Under the Budget, the state's Rainy Day Fund will have a total balance of $2.8 billion by the end of the year – an insurance policy against future economic downturns. The Budget spends an additional $1.2 billion from Proposition 2 funds on paying off loans from special funds and past liabilities from Proposition 98. In addition, the Budget repays the remaining $1 billion in deferrals to schools and community colleges, makes the last payment on the $15 billion in Economic Recovery Bonds that was borrowed to cover budget deficits from as far back as 2002 and repays local governments $533 million in mandate reimbursements.

Increase K-12 School Spending by $2,600 Per Student Compared to 2011-12

For K-12 schools, funding levels will increase by more than $2,600 per student in 2015-16 over 2011-12 levels. This reinvestment provides the opportunity to correct historical inequities in school district funding with continued implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula. Rising state revenues mean that the state can continue implementing the formula well ahead of schedule. When the formula was adopted in 2013-14, funding was expected to be $47 billion in 2015-16. The Budget provides almost $4 billion more – with the formula instead allocating $50.7 billion this coming year.

Hold Tuition Flat for College Students

University tuition almost doubled during the recession, creating a hardship for many students and their families. The Budget commits $762 million to each of the university systems that is directly attributable to the passage of Proposition 30. This increased funding is provided contingent on tuition remaining flat. All cost containment strategies must be explored before asking California families to pay even more for tuition.

Expand Workforce Training

The Budget provides over $1.2 billion in funding to support a coordinated framework for adult education, career technical education, workforce investment and apprenticeships. These funds are intended to provide training and education to workers in California so they can develop the skills they need for self-sufficiency and greater personal advancement.

Provide Medi-Cal Health Care Coverage to 12.2 Million Californians

Due principally to the implementation of federal health care reform, Medi-Cal caseload has increased from 7.9 million in 2012-13 to an estimated 12.2 million this coming year. The program now covers 32 percent of the state's population. This tremendous expansion of health care coverage for low-income Californians continues to be an administrative and financial challenge.

Prefund Retiree Health Care

The state's unfunded liability for retiree health care benefits is currently estimated at $72 billion. State health care benefits for retired employees remain one of the fastest growing areas of the state budget: in 2001, retiree health benefits made up 0.6 percent of the General Fund budget ($458 million) but today absorb 1.6 percent ($1.9 billion). Without action, the state's unfunded liability will grow to $100 billion by 2020-21 and $300 billion by 2047-48. The Budget proposes a plan to make these benefits more affordable by adopting various measures to lower the growth in premium costs. The Budget calls for the state and its employees to share equally in the prefunding of retiree health benefits, to be phased in as labor contracts come up for renewal. Under this plan, investment returns will help pay for future benefits, just as with the state's pension plans, to eventually eliminate the unfunded liability by 2044-45. Over the next 50 years, this approach will save nearly $200 billion.

Denham Statement on California High Speed Rail Groundbreaking

U.S. Representative Jeff Denham (R-Turlock) released the following statement concerning the California High-Speed Rail Authority's recent groundbreaking ceremony in Fresno:

"California voters were promised jobs, ridership numbers, speeds and costs that look nothing like the current proposal. The Authority promised taxpayers a shovel-ready project when it took more than $3 billion in federal tax dollars. There is simply no way the Authority will meet the 2017 deadline to spend the stimulus funding, a failure 10 years in the making. It's hard to celebrate breaking ground on what is likely to become abandoned pieces of track that never connect to a useable segment."

Child Find Project Seeks Children Needing Special Services

Do you know that every child with a disability has the right to a free, appropriate public education? The Tulare County "Child Find" Project can assist with referring children to appropriate educational programs. Children with disabilities may be eligible for educational services from birth through age 21.

Parents or friends who believe that a child may have a mental or physical disability can find help by calling the Tulare County Office of Education or their local school district. The CHILD FIND PROJECT is designed to identify children who may be in need of special education services and connect them with appropriate educational programs.

Special education services and programs are available in Tulare County for children with disabilities from birth through 21 years of age. Services are available for children with disabilities in autism, blindness or vision impairment, deafness or hearing impairment, speech, physical or orthopedic disability, learning disabilities, behavior disorders, intellectual disabilities or other health impairments.

The goal of the CHILD FIND PROJECT is to be sure that every child in Tulare County attends school and receives appropriate services. Child Find accepts referrals and screens children who may have a disability. The child is then referred to an appropriate educational program for evaluation and/or services. Assessments are provided at no cost to parents. Information is confidential and the privacy of children and parents is protected.

Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak says, "The CHILD FIND PROJECT is an excellent way of notifying parents of exemplary services and compassionate people who are here to help children with disabilities."

If you know of a child with a disability who is not receiving services, please call Child Find at (559) 730-2910, Ext 5120 for more information or to make a referral.

Visalia Chamber of Commerce and Visalia Unified School District Announce a Linked Learning Community Lunch

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce and Visalia Unified School District (VUSD) will be hosting a lunch to celebrate the launch of the Linked Learning Academies on January 21. Linked Learning combines rigorous academics, with career themed courses and work-based learning in an academy structure.

The lunch is an opportunity for VUSD and the Chamber to thank those employers and business leaders who have volunteered to actively participate in the Linked Learning program. The Chamber is working with VUSD to connect local business leaders directly with students in the classroom. "We understand the importance of having real world experiences integrated into the classroom learning process and are proud to partner with the school district to bring first-hand knowledge and experiences straight to the students." stated Gail Zurek, CEO of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce. Many business leaders have joined advisory boards and are working with VUSD to formulate curriculum, provide guest speakers, open their facilities for class tours, create job shadowing prospects and ultimately provide internships opportunities.

"Work-based learning has been around for years in a number of forms. VUSD is excited to be partnering with the Visalia Chamber of Commerce to promote and advance its business engagement activities." stated Bill Davis, Director of Career and Technical Education, VUSD. The Linked Learning goal for VUSD is to offer two Linked Learning Academies at each of the five high schools in Visalia. On January 21 and 22, every VUSD eighth grader will take part in a district-wide recruitment event. Students will be encouraged to apply to an academy of their choice, regardless of where they live.

The community lunch will take place at the courtyard next to LJ Williams Theatre on January 21 at noon, and will be catered by the Redwood High School culinary arts program. Individuals interested in learning more about the Linked Learning program are invited to attend the student recruitment session at 11am at LJ Williams and stay for the lunch program. Please RSVP for the lunch to the Visalia Chamber of Commerce 559-734-5876 by January 15.

Three Visalians Receive California Water Scholarships

Three students from Visalia were among the recipients of California Water Service Company's inaugural college scholarship program. The students, selected based on academic achievement and community involvement, were recognized at a presentation on January 14 at Cal Water's Customer Center, 216 N. Valley Oaks Drive, in Visalia.

Twins Cameron and Tyler Haberman are the first generation of their family to pursue higher education. Both attended Mt. Whitney High School and are now freshmen at the University of California, Berkeley, studying pre-business. In high school, both played baseball and basketball, with Cameron serving as captain of the varsity basketball team. Both held officer positions in Key Club, and both volunteered with the Salvation Army. Cameron was senior class vice president, while Tyler was secretary of the Drama Club.

Joshua Polich, a graduate of Golden West High School, is majoring in agricultural business at Fresno State University. A member of the CSU Fresno ski and snowboard team, Joshua also enjoys mountain biking. He works for an agricultural irrigation dealer serving Central California.

HSR

Continued from p. 11

been felt. HSR has created 632 jobs and eventually 20,000 people will work on the system. As a condition of receiving the $3 billion in federal stimulus money, work on HSR had to start in the disadvantaged Central Valley and have at least 30% small business participation in all contracts. According to the Authority, as of September 2014, 40 small businesses have active contracts valued at $296 million on CP 1, the 29-mile stretch from Madera County to Fresno County.

Many of the small business owners and workers were on hand at the ground breaking to give their testimonies. Jill Kroeker with J. Kroeker Inc., said that her company is not just providing jobs, but careers. By being awarded the job of recycling, she has had to hire and train more employees who will keep the skills for the rest of their lives.

Katchadourian said that his company started with eight employees but now has 25 since he received the HSR bid for demolition. He decided to offer those jobs to those who had been looking for work for a long time. He partnered with Calworks to find the right people and train them in asbestos cleanup, hazardous material clean up and to be supervisors.

"These people are now working who wouldn't be without HSR. All they needed was an opportunity," he said.

Mayor Ashley Swearengin kicked off the formal celebration by thanking Fresno for its continued support of HSR. She thanked the city for its perseverance of a project that had been 30 years in the making and congratulated Fresnans on being in at "the beginning of the nations' first HSR project that promises to connect Northern, Central and Southern California like never before." She concluded by saying, "Now let's get it done."

Jerry Brown and other officials signed a ceremonial set of railroad tracks.

Dan Richard, chair of the California high Speed Rail Authority, who emceed the event, hoped that everyone had had a long and dreary car ride to Fresno. He said that this ceremony was the demarcation between talking about HSR and really doing it.

"Now we build. We are entering a period of sustained construction on the nation's first HSR system for the next five years in the Central Valley, and in the decades beyond that we will be building across California." Richard continued, "And today is also a celebration of the renewed spirit that built California." He explained that it will spur the economy, clean the environment and connect the state.

Richard introduced two university students who chair the #iwillride campaign. The Millennial generation makes up the most ardent supporters of HSR--especially in the valley. For the younger generation, HSR represents opportunity and the ability to come back home after college and find high-quality jobs. The university students expressed their gratitude to the supporters of HSR for investing in their future. They thanked the HSR supporters for creating a more connected California and providing the opportunity to live, grow, and work right here where they were born.

Representative Jim Costa likened the HSR to the transpacific railway completed in 1869. He reminded the audience that all great projects had their detractors: The State Water Project, championed by then Gov. Pat Brown, passed by only one vote; The Golden Gate Bridge endured 2700 lawsuits before finally persevering; BART almost didn't get built at all. Federal Railroad Administration Chief, Joseph Szabo, said that once these major projects were built, "the naysayers were all long forgotten. It pays to be on the right side of history."

Governor Jerry Brown was the last to speak and quickly discounted any doubts that the money would be found to finish the project.

"California generates over two trillion a year. For a train that has a 100-year life span, that's $300 trillion, making $68 billion very affordable. It's not that expensive. We can afford it. In fact we cannot afford not to do it as we look at building a future that really works," Brown said.

"My inclination is not to spend anything," Brown continued. "But on the other hand I like trains. I like clean air. And I like to enjoy the comfort of trains. I like to get up and walk around and shake hands. You can't do that in your little car as you look in your rear view mirror."

Brown also said that he would like to protect as much agricultural land as possible. HSR critics complain about the rail cutting through prime agriculture land but have not mentioned how much farm land has been paved over by highways, gas stations and roadside developments. Szabo said that two sets of railroad tracks can carry as much traffic in an hour as 16 freeway lanes. According to the public Policy Institute of California, the state's rate of growth sets it apart from the rest of the developed world. In ten years California's population will surpass that of Spain, one of the many countries with HSR crisscrossing its territory.

"We have to have an efficient cost-effective, environmentally responsible way to move them," said Szabo.

Construction of a bridge over the Fresno River in Madera has already begun, so this celebration was a symbolic beginning of the HSR project. The groundbreaking and dignitaries' speeches ignited a fire and passion for the future of California that will not be easily extinguished. California is a pioneer in innovation, the environment, technology, social issues--everything, said Lisa Alley, Deputy Director of Public Affairs.

"Things happen in California. Texas and Florida are on our heels but we will be the first to build a high speed rail and I'm proud of that," she said.

Protesters assembled with signs pointing out HSR's drain on the budget.

Paul Katchadourian, owner of a company doing demolition work for the HSR.

Ashley Swearengin speaks at the HSR ground breaking event.

California Governor Jerry Brown

Viewpoint

Fight Terror Again, and Again, and Again. Or End It By Refusing to Participate In Its Creation

Patrick T. Hiller

The cycle of violence. When will it be interrupted? The attack on Charlie Hebdo was another incident of "Terror in [fill in the blank]… attackers part of [fill in name of terror network]". It was an incident of home-grown terror, since the attackers were French-born second-generation immigrants. It is time to shift away from ineffective, reactive tactics and strategies of dealing with this kind of terror toward conflict transformation, by transforming the structures leading to terrorism.

Let's be clear. The assassins in Paris did not avenge the Prophet and their horrific violence cannot be reconciled with Islam. They were not noble, holy warriors, they were violent criminals. They killed 12 people and in addition to those lives, the lives of their families were destroyed. Their attacks opened space for further destructive cycles of conflict, support for security crackdowns, and virtually endless military campaigns as we still are seeing in the post 9/11/01 global war on terror. If we continue on this path we "condemn the global community to ongoing terror", as political scientist Lindsay Heger argues in her piece Redrawing our Strategy on Terror.

Here's the usual:

At the height of conflict several things take place. First, we tend to see generalizations as we hear in the "clash of civilizations", "us versus them", or the "battle between Islam and freedom of speech." Second, there is stereotyping, as we can see in the generalizations and assumptions about all members of a group. In this case a group as large and diverse as the 1.6 billion Muslims in the world. Third, there are knee-jerk reactions like calls for "collective detention" or "nuke them" by many so-called internet trolls. These often come with dehumanization of the other group. Fourth, tit-for-tat tactics are used as we can see in the attacks on Mosques in France. Fifth, the issues are changed deliberatively as we can see in US mainstream media commentators using the attack to promote torture or criticize New York City's Mayor de Blasio's politics. Sixth, emotions are exploited, fear is installed, and drastic measures are advocated as we see in far-right National Front political party leader Marine Le Pen's call for a referendum on reinstating the death penalty. All these are destructive, but very commonly used approaches of dealing with conflict. All these are ways of our participating in the cycle of continuing terror.

Here are some immediate better ways:

First and foremost, national and international law enforcement and judicial processes for individuals and groups involved in acts of terror.

Second, a call for unity from the international community, political, cultural and religious leaders condemning all forms of violent extremism.

Third, a societal response of answering hatred with love and compassion, as we have seen in Norway's dignified response to the mass murder by islamophobic Anders Breivik.

Here are some long-term responses addressing broader, structural changes:

First, terrorism is a political problem. The colonial history and the current violent western presence in the Middle East as well as the arbitrary support for some dictators are key to providing terrorists with a support base without which they would not be able to operate and even exist. As we see this support base now goes far beyond the Middle East and has reached the suburbs of Paris and inspires other unconnected lone-wolf terrorists. Lindsay Heger argues correctly that we need to create creative governance solutions aimed at de-linking terrorists from societies. This applies just as much to groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria as it applies to the Muslim immigrant population in France.

Second, terrorism is a social problem. The gunmen were French-born descendants of Algerian immigrants. It is nothing new that there are tensions between the predominantly white, Christian, French society and mainly Muslim first- and second- generation immigrant populations of African origin. The majority of immigrants belong to the economic lower class of society. Poverty, unemployment and crime are common issues the young, male immigrants are facing.

Third, terrorism is a cultural problem. Muslim immigrant populations in Europe need to be able to freely develop and express their sense of self and sense of belonging. The politics of integration must allow for diversity and co-existence without imposed assimilation and inequality.

Some might argue that these suggestions have flaws, that they are not perfect, that they will never work, and so on. Yes, they have flaws, they are not perfect, and sometimes we do not know the outcome. What we know for sure is that more militarized security, sacrificing our rights, and more military campaigns makes us participants in terror. And they definitely do not work unless our intent is to recruit more terrorists.

Terrorists will be part of us as long as we don't address the root causes and as long as we participate in it. Terror ends when we stop creating terrorists and when we stop participating in it.

Patrick. T. Hiller, Ph.D., Hood River, OR, syndicated by PeaceVoice*, is a Conflict Transformation scholar, professor, on the Governing Council of the International Peace Research Association, and Director of the War Prevention Initiative of the Jubitz Family Foundation.*

Global Justice for Our Girls: Hashtags and Selfies Still Aren't Enough

Jeanine Russaw

Thirty. Twenty. Fifteen.

She puts up a good fight: struggling, kicking, and biting are just par for the course. Not to mention, she's used to it; it's happened before. Ten. Five. She lets out an agonizing scream. Zero.

It's too late. She's gone. Thirty seconds is all it takes for a girl to be taken from her world and everything she knows. For the276 Nigerian girls kidnapped by the Boko Haram in April 2014, life was forever changed in 30 seconds and they are not even aware of the barely consistent tweeting and micro-blogging that has been done on their behalf. Sixty-three of the girls escaped earlier this month, and there are Nigerian governmental attempts to provide reparations. But there is a lot more to be done for the women and girls remaining – in Nigeria and beyond – and hashtags and selfies just aren't enough.

"Every year, at least another two million girls worldwide disappear because of gender discrimination." Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl Wu Dunn found this distressing statistic on their quest to shed light on deadly sexism with their 2009 book, Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide.

The chilling reality of sexism in the developing world presented by Kristof and Wu Dunn is one that often keeps me awake at night. Perhaps the most troubling is the lack of meaningful action taken by my fellow Americans who, aside from the occasional hashtag #BringBackOurGirls, or a selfie with a poster, are not immune to apathetic attitudes in the face of blatant sexism – even in their own backyards.

Of course, hashtags and selfies by themselves are not inherently bad. Rather, the problem lies in what they represent. This form of citizen media is indicative of nothing more than a fad and when the trend fades away, so does the concern. Since when did it become okay for the lives of innocent young women to be viewed as "the next big thing?" All of a sudden, it was considered "hip" to care about the wellbeing of women and post a selfie with the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls – as if that is actually going to transport the ladies to a safe home with their families.

The rising use of this hashtag occurred with First Lady Michelle Obama's own influential selfie. While there can be no fault found in the Obama's support for the delicate situation, sensationalism can often blind us to the issue at hand. We become infatuated with the idea of taking some immediate military action as opposed to actually acting on our ideals. Hashtags and bombs are not the only options.

I'm not suggesting that we have to get on the next plane heading to Nigeria and demand to meet with Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau, but we can at least take the time to become educated about the true goings on of Boko Haram beyond Twitter and #BringBackOurGirls. Only then can we think logically about our collective role in the struggle.

There are many options we can take to help provide justice for girls and women in Nigeria and worldwide, and we should feel compelled to do so. Of most importance is to actively align ourselves with organizations and activists who are already working against global oppression of women. Such as She's the First, which sponsors worldwide female education with the intention of "creating our next generation of global leaders." Another example is Girl Up, which has been active in bringing awareness to ongoing gender discrimination by "uniting girls to change the world." Then there is my personal favorite, Kristof and Wu Dunn's Half the Sky Movement, which "turns oppression into opportunity for women worldwide."

And, our fight against gendered violence can't stop at man-made, national boundaries. As the release date of Kristof and Wu Dunn's latest book, A Path Appears, approaches, we must realize a serious injustice: that geographic location is often the only difference between our suffering and their suffering. As a young American woman, I am no different than those of Nigerian descent. That could just as easily have been me – or you – had I been born of Nigerian parents as opposed to Americans ones. Remove the geographic, genetic lottery and an injustice to one looks a lot more like an injustice to all.

How do we make the world safer and eliminate the terror for those of us born without a Y chromosome? No, the answer is not:Let's hashtag a selfie about it! As well, the answer is not: Let's send over some advisors and weapons! Our fight against global sexism and gendered violence must remain resolute, but preventing and eliminating gendered injustices, at home and abroad, must center on active participation in and full support of civil society movements already engaged in the struggle.

Jeanine Russaw (@jMarieRussaw), writing for PeaceVoice, is a multimedia journalist, freelance writer and a senior at Hofstra University majoring in journalism and global studies and concentrating on human rights reporting and female/minority empowerment.

Columns & Letters

Clean Is Less Mean

Bill Huott

Just completed a 2am, north Visalia drive around. I was told by many, if not all, the alleys could never be cleaned, maintained, and certainly not remain clean on an ongoing basis. I just drove by, checked many, not all, but certainly the "hot" alleys. All virtually clear by any measurement! My Theory was to keep it clean and then that will be "the way we roll." Allow to be dirty and that will attract like behaviors like dumpings. A true miracle, where vision meets with action to produce results. Thanks to all city staff, especially Council, Code and Trash for supporting this approach in this effort. It has true ripple effects to the vibe in the area. The youth and families residing here will be living in a cleaner and safer area.

On these North Visalia streets, ultimately, it became a street vibe cultural tug of war, a battle, a fight for the hearts and minds of the youth and families who live here in the present for the future. Either the vibe was going to be the world I grew up in when I was a kid, or it was going be the new, 50 year slide, deteriorated, rat hole, angry world, I realized I had moved into. That was the MMA, last man standing, battle. It was a clash of cultures, one caring, one abandoned. I will pass the caring baton on.

I will give you a Reader Digest version of my twenty-plus year tale:

In 1987, I moved into north Visalia, bought my house on an alley. Right out of the blocks, within two months of living here, I was broken into, stuff stolen, exit or entry access, through the alley, twice. My alley became my nemesis. I started to be very curious about the purpose of the alley. I contacted the city when the alley light went out and discovered, the alley light wasn't fixed, but the fixture was removed.

Now, I had a dark alley. I have found and observed many dumpings in the alleys, some of the more notable: dead dogs dumped in shopping carts, four dead calves, break ins in progress, secret access for stolen car rings, Gang graffiti, collections of full shopping carts filled with trash, debris and even needles, hiding stolen cars, illegal auto repair businesses, unsavory, suspected burglars scouting, constant breaking through fences, jumping fences, innumerable break ins on people around me, armed gun in your face carjacking on a moving neighbor, just to name a few. My two favorites are dumped couches and mattresses.

I, at some point, focused on just keeping my one alley, clean. But, this led to observing other alleys around me, which also had the same issues. Further down my adventure, I searched out and explored all the north Visalia alleys. Kind of like, where there is blight/crime in one, there is blight/crime for all. I was told, early on in this pursuit, by a long time law enforcement individual, to, "stay out of those alleys, you are going get hurt." I thought he was probably right, but either the bad guys were moving or I was and my phrase which I coined was, "I am not moving to a nice neighborhood, I want a nice neighborhood to move to me!"

What I noticed was the dangerous alleys were exactly square one of the problems and solutions for north Visalia. The alleys were controlled by an element that also controlled the whole neighborhood. I was determined to make sure my alley was clean and safe and what was good for me, could also be good for the other 25 or so alleys. Problem was, these alleys had been out of control for years. No ownership, no plan, no response. I appealed to the city. The city's answer was that each alley was the responsibility of each property owner who lived on that alley. This, then, was a dead end to solve the problem. No one appeared to care, or were organized. Also, the alleys change every twelve hours. Go to bed, clean; wake up, giant pile of debris. Also, some spots were well known, as unofficially, recognized dumps. Everyone knew these spots, and lots of people used them as dumps.

My plan, keep them clean. Monitor any changes, report it, do something. Haul it away, then use my trash container to put trash. Appeal to the city for help, positively. The city, many times, seeing I was trying to help, and not just complaining, supported me when they could, by their very stringent rules.

In the end, even though I was one person, I realized that the efforts paid off and had a positive and ripple effect. Alleys, which were long time dumpsites, started to change and spend more days clean, than full of trash. Success only encouraged me. Along the way, I started to meet good person, after good person. I learned names, the true joy of the journey had begun. I noticed a different vibe, more positive, more friendly. The scary ones didn't like it so clean. The scary ones started disappearing. Scary people like filth, good people like clean. They were replaced with people who shared my vision. I started to notice a person here, a person there, were cleaning the alleys, which I had never seen before and this has been a twenty-year observation.

At some point, we, the alleys, the neighborhood, north Visalia, reached a tipping point, where, "the way we roll", is the alleys are not dumped in, where before, that was the thing to do. Still, there will always be people who take shortcuts, and dump, but vigilance keeps an eye on the trends, patterns and hot spots. This informal, un-approved, citizen action plan, at virtually no cost to the city, has turned north Visalia scary alleys into mostly clean, peaceful lanes.

Bill Huott

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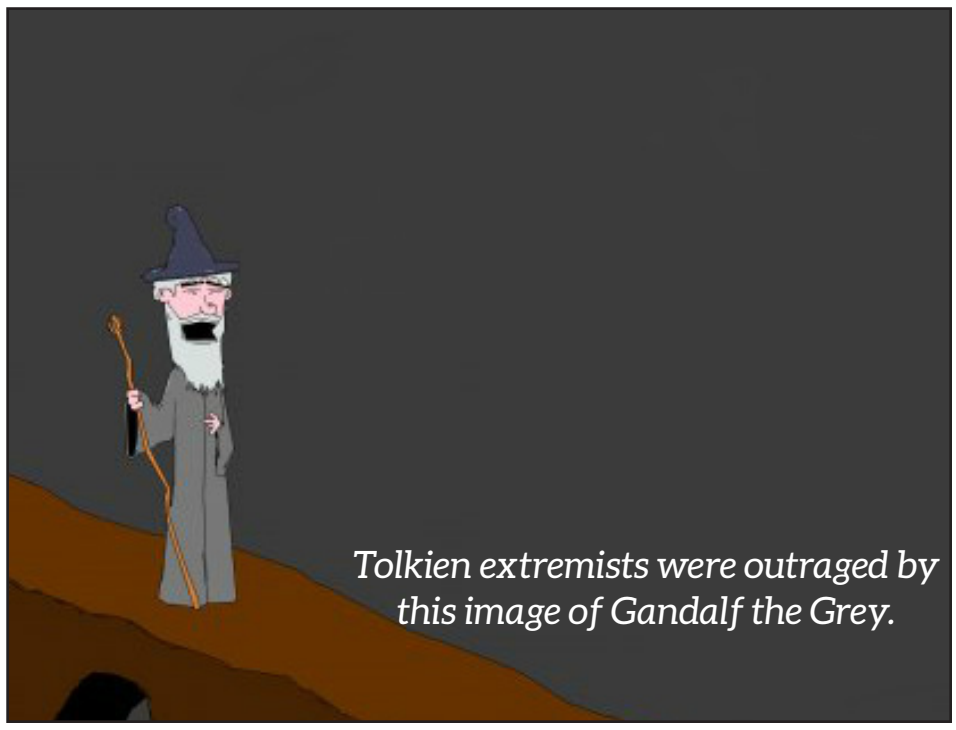
Black Tie

Alex Oldenbourg



Tolkien extremists were outraged by this image of Gandalf the Grey.

Veteran's Corner

New and Material Evidence

Joe Wright

A veteran may reopen a finally adjudicated claim by submitting new and material evidence. New evidence means existing evidence not previously submitted to the VA. Material evidence means existing evidence that, by itself or when considered with previous evidence, relates to an unestablished fact necessary to substantiate a claim. New and material evidence can be neither cumulative nor redundant of the evidence of record and must raise a reasonable possibility of substantiating the claim. New and material evidence received prior to the expiration of the appeal period, or prior to the appeal decision if a timely appeal has been filed, will be considered as having been filed in connection with the claim which was pending at the beginning of the appeal period.

Once a decision is made, if the VA receives or associates relevant official service department records that existed and had not been associated with the claim when it first decided the claim, the VA will reconsider the claim. These records may include service records that are related to a claimed in-service event, injury, or disease; additional service records forwarded by the Department of Defense or the service department to the VA any time after its original request for service records; or declassified records that could not have been obtained because the records were classified when the VA decided the claim. This does not apply to records that the VA could not have obtained when it decided the claim because the records did not exist, or because the veteran failed to provide sufficient information for the VA to identify and obtain the records.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office issues Veteran ID cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Joe Wright if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com.

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd., Hanford, CA 93230; call 852-2669; or e-mail joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us.

Online Comments

Comment at ourvalleyvoice.com or fb.me/ourvalleyvoice

"I have worked at a k-8 school my whole teaching career (29 years) at Sequoia Union Elementary School in Lemon Cove. We have created many opportunities for our jr hi students from a Drama program, sports program, leadership opportunities, and much more. It just means teachers have to be willing to put in extra time for these programs. Our students scored well on the old STAR test with our scores one of the top in the valley. We prepare our students for their academics and our students are very successful in high school."

— ***Linda Lofgren,*** *on* ***Visalia Unified K-8 System***

"LOL you didn't even watch the movie "The Interview" yet you write about it with out even watching the whole thing!, i watched it last night! *(spoiler alert Kim Jong-un doesn't die in the movie) another movie you should watch is WAG the dog , wake up people…….

— ***alex station,*** *on* ***A Truly Remote Attack***

County

Continued from p. 1

communication within the department.

Health and Human Services is moving forward on several fronts expanding its workforce to deal with expanded state and federal programs and constructing and staffing a new mental health facility in Porterville.

Resource Management Agency under the recent leadership change to Director Michael Spata and assistant director Michael Washam will continue expedited community plans for Goshen, Pixley, Tipton, Earlimart, Strathmore and Tera Bella/ Ducor, consistent with the county's general plan of development opportunities along major transportation corridors. Also, starting January 30, the permit center will be open on Friday mornings from 9-11 a.m. and a state of the art GIS-based permit system will be operational during the coming year.

After an exemplary career as the head of the UC Ag extension services in Tulare County, the number one agricultural county in the nation, Jim Sullins will be retiring later this year. Jim's retirement continues the trend of baby boomers exiting the work force and leaving the county with the challenge of hiring qualified replacements.

Solid waste is expected to reach franchise agreements with the county's solid waste haulers and complete negotiations with cities over the hauling of their waste stream to county landfills.

Purchasing is nearly ready to move into new quarters located under the old Ag Commissioner's office escaping the old courthouse and its time consuming security system.

Planning will begin to move Human Resources into the former Ag Commissioner's office providing a highly visible location for prospective and current employees.

Planning will also occur to relocate Risk Management into the offices currently occupied by Human Resources putting them in closer proximity to County Counsel and allowing County Counsel to also expand beyond its current quarters.

Tulare County Information and Communications Technology will be moving from the basement of the old courthouse and government plaza into the facilities vacated by the Office of Education allowing for consolidation of staff under one roof and increasing efficiencies thereby. Planning and improvements will commence after the premises are vacated this fall.

Capital projects will complete office improvements to the offices of the Assessor, Auditor, and Public Defender.

Shifting to the county as a whole, we need to take advantage of our improving financial position as reflected by increasing property value assessments and sales tax revenues to review county operations. To deal with the past difficult financial times, a number of positions were frozen to conserve labor costs. The time has come to strategically examine those positions and look at rebuilding our work force to meet the public's expectation for services. We are also aware that many employees personally sacrificed putting in long hours to accomplish workloads increased by those unfilled positions. The time has come for management to evaluate those situations and devise plans to restore positions where needed.

The county historically maintained a very modest reserve even as our budget has grown significantly. We need to establish a more robust reserve in keeping with our larger overall budget and protect the county from future downturns in the economy. While it will take time to accomplish, it would seem reasonable to set a goal of $50 million as a prudent reserve based upon our current budget which exceeds $1 Billion.

We need to continue to encourage and support our employees to gain new skills and tools to accomplish their job responsibilities. Outside expertise to evaluate our current operational systems together with harnessing the expertise of our own staff should be ongoing and measured to achieve goals set by our own departments and this board. This is an area where we have made great strides, as in the current transition of real property assessments to a new state of the art computer system. But continuing improvement really has no ending point. Improving technology, streamlined processes and improved skills are ongoing. We need to encourage our staff to take reasonable risks and strategize and explore opportunities to continually improve performance.

On a longer time horizon we are well positioned to look at future office and operations needs of the county. Removing staff from the courthouse so that the public and employees can avoid unnecessary security searches to other facilities can dramatically improve services with less aggravation. No one can seriously suggest that getting a marriage license requires security screening. Or can they?

The recent termination by the Office of Education of leases to two large buildings in the heart of our government complex and possible opportunities to purchase additional property at costs well below today's construction costs provides a catalyst to examine yesterday's plans and determine whether a new direction is warranted. At the end of the day, we must review all options from sale of obsolete or unneeded properties to the purchase or construction of facilities to meet the needs of a growing county and our staffing levels.

I would be remiss if I did not make mention of the severe drought which the entire state has endured and the county's role going forward. While we pray and hope for above average rain and snowfall for the remainder of the year, the impact to our groundwater will not be alleviated for some time. Tulare County will continue to seek funding opportunities and work with non-profit and faith based entities to help meet our residents' critical water supply needs. The County will continue to work with local partners and State and Federal legislators to bridge funding gaps and remove obstacles to move projects forward.

In closing, I truly look forward to working with my colleagues, CAO Jean Rousseau and his able department, and the rest of our county department heads and staff in the coming year. Looking back to my three previous chairmanships I believe the opportunities this year may easily eclipse all the others. Our employee strength and financial soundness provides a sound base from which to spring into action. Tulare County stands ready to meet the needs of its residents and lead the state as an example of local government which is compassionate, effective and efficient.

VALLEY VOICE
Valley Scene

Eating on Exeter's E Street

Catherine Doe

Parlez-vous Exeter? If you don't, you better start, if you like Haute Cuisine. With the Grand opening of Café Lafayette, the choices for "fine dining" just doubled in Exeter.

Café Lafayette, at 151 South E Street, had its grand opening on January 3. Not a table was available and the bar was overflowing with patrons. Besides fine dining, Café Lafayette's bar provides an alternative scene to Exeter's only other bar, the Stag. No reservations were available a few days before and the restaurant has been full every night following its opening. Owner, Fred Imbert, says it has been crazy.

The reasoning behind the crowds is "because people know me and they were waiting for me to open," said Imbert, who added he enjoys a reputation as an excellent French chef.

Imbert's cooking career started at his grandmother's restaurant in the spa town of Evian on the French side of Lake Geneva. He then apprenticed in Paris and London before somehow ending up in Visalia. Imbert was sous-chef at the Radisson and the head chef at Kaweah Delta Hospital; in between cooking gigs in Visalia, he owned a bakery in Hanford.

The bakery was very successful, but "the life of a baker is hard," he said.

Somewhere in his cooking career, Imbert was discovered by Jennifer Davis, owner of Monet's Wine Bistro. There he was head chef for seven years.

Having always wanted his own restaurant, Imbert took a leap, he said, and bought the building which was formerly home to Mama's Restaurant. Large wood-framed windows look over the patio in a beautiful brick building that appears to be one of the older structures in Exeter. There is a spacious main room, a bar and two banquet rooms toward the back, which are used for general dining when not reserved.

Imbert will tell you his specialty is the entire menu. His cooking is French-inspired, with an American twist. He met his Chef de Cuisine Nathan Ochoa, at Monet's and trained him. Ochoa joined Imbert in opening Café Lafayette.

On that cold January night, not only was Café Lafayette bursting at the seams, but Monet's was as well just across the street. Davis opened Monet's Wine Bistro seven years ago as the first "fine dining" establishment in Exeter. Monet's is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11am to 10pm. Catering is available and the restaurant offers weekend specials, such as herb and mustard crusted lamb chops with Tiramisu for dessert.

Chef Fred Imbert and staff in action on opening night.

Also lining the two blocks of E Street in downtown Exeter are five other eating establishments. The owners of The Lunch Box in Visalia will be opening another Lunch Box in the former Hole in the Wall Pizza. Across the street is Cappella Coffee House. Cappella has

E STREET continued on **25 »**

"Ancient Souls," by Betty Berk.

Expressions/Impressions

Kevin Bowman

Works by three prolific painters were highlighted during the January 9 opening exhibition of 2015 at Arts Visalia. Titled Expressions/Impressions, the exhibition featuring paintings by Abby Rubinstein, Betty Berk and Mona Fox Selph will be on display through January 30.

Brilliant colors and expressive brushwork form the basis of the majority of the works of the three artists, each of whom uses the medium of painting not merely to describe the world around them. These are images imbued with a sense of inner emotion so that the viewer is invited to transcend mere spectatorship, and, as Rubinstein will often say, find themselves "invited into the painting." Each artist follows her own subject matter, and their styles vary from one another, but all of the works are marked by the use of brilliant, rich colors and active brushwork.

Betty Berk is one of the more active artists currently exhibiting in the Central Valley and serves as the director of exhibitions for the Fresno-based Alliance of California Artists. Berk credits many inspirations behind her work including, in fact, fellow exhibition partner, Rubinstein, under whom she studied painting for several years. Having recently taken up the study of music, Berk describes the influence of music upon her painting. "Each brush stroke is not only a mark of the movement of my brush, but also the thought process of how bright or dull,

ARTS VISALIA continued on **28 »**

NAACP Hanford Unit 1039 Announces 2015 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Event

Staff Reports

Hanford's 9th annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration, hosted by the NAACP Hanford Unit 1039, will feature United States Congressman David G. Valadao, 21st Congressional District, as the keynote speaker.

The January 19 event, kicking off at 10am, will include music and entertainment provided by students from local schools and many other groups. Admission is free and the event is open to the public.

Congressman Valadao was born and raised in Hanford, where he has been active in agriculture and dairy industry groups, as well as many local causes including Children's Hospital Central California, 4-H, Future Farmers of America, and various Catholic Charities.

Valadao's family immigrated from the Azores Islands of Portugal to the United States in 1969. After settling in the Central Valley, Valadao's father started a small dairy farm in the Central Valley in 1973. The Congressman's family is still involved in agribusiness and Valadao himself is intimately involved in the dairy industry. He has served on the California Milk Advisory Board, Western States Dairy Trade Association, and was elected as Regional Leadership Council Chairman for Land O' Lakes Inc. He now serves as a partner of Valadao Dairy. The Congressman married his high school sweetheart, Terra, in 1999, and they have three children. Valadao is proud to serve on the House Appropriations Committee, specifically the Agriculture, Interior, and Military Construction and Veteran Affairs Subcommittees.

NAACP Hanford Unit 1039 was reactivated in 2004 by a group led by Dr. Willard Roberson, who later became President of the Unit in May of 2005. Since its reactivation, the Unit has achieved many successes toward community betterment, including offering scholarship funds to top achieving high school students in Kings County. Unit 1039 had headed the effort for the City of Hanford to officially observe the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday. The Unit also provides support for the civil rights for all residents in Kings County.

Martin Luther King, Jr., speaking against the Vietnam War, St. Paul Campus, University of Minnesota. Photo by Minnesota Historical Society

Contact Dr. Willard Roberson, 559-584-5501 or Al Cason, 559-707-9560 for more information.

Upcoming Exhibits at the Kings Art Center

Staff Reports

Two new exhibits will be on display at the Kings Art Center's Marcellus and Members Galleries, located at 605 N. Douty Street in Hanford. Beginning on January 31, paintings by Dale Laitinen and drawings by Bridgette Cervantes, which can be viewed until March 21.

"GLORY HOLE, LAKE BERRYESSA," BY DALE LAITINEN "WHITE DIAGONALS: HOOVER DAM," BY DALE LAITINEN "COUPE," BY BRIDGETTE CERVANTES.

Featured in the Marcellus Gallery will be "WATER" -- The Watermedia of Dale Laitinen. An active workshop instructor, Laitinen has presented widely in both the U.S. and abroad.

"My paintings tend to be highly designed," Laitinen said, "from representational to abstract, but all based on my language of shape." The timely theme of Laitinen's upcoming exhibit will be water--both the natural structures that source and channel it, and the manmade constructs which feed and contain it. Laitinen continued:

"Water has become a precious commodity in this age of drought and plenty. California and the West have always been a land of extremes, with the highest mountains and lowest valleys; from the wettest climates to the driest, this environment continues to challenge us. In this collection of watermedia and oil paintings I have considered the theme of water. From its source to its use; the works, without prejudice, visually examine the effects of this life-sustaining liquid on the landscape. Subjects range from High Sierra rivers and reservoirs that feed California to the deserts of the West. Other images include the engineered works of dams that contain these waters."

Laitinen will conduct a watercolor workshop at the Kings Art Center on Friday and Saturday Feb. 6 and 7. Please contact the Art Center at 559-584-1065 for details and registration.

The Members Gallery will host Drawings by Bridgette Cervantes. Accomplished in her signature charcoal and graphite, Cervantes--whose pictures, uncannily, seem to move--will primarily display drawings of ballet. As a young child Cervantes took classes at the Kings Art Center after she "fell in love with art." Since then she has focused on her drawing skills.

"The theme for most of this work is the ballet," Cervantes said. "Unfortunately, due to a high school injury in a dance class, I no longer dance so my involvement is now through drawing. I have found that I am most able to capture the images I want through the use of charcoal and graphite, as these materials allow me to manipulate the medium to achieve the expressive qualities I desire."

There will be a reception for both exhibits on Friday, January 30 from 5:30 to 7:30pm. Admission is free, and tours are given by appointment. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Friday, 11am-4pm, and is open noon to 3pm on both Saturday and Sunday. For more information call 559-584-1065.

Local CEOs Share Tips with Teen CEOs

Staff Reports

Students from the Visalia/Tulare Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) were introduced to seven local CEOs on Thursday, January 15, all of whom volunteered their time to discuss with the students their roles, companies, background, and to offer them helpful business and networking advice. The CEOs shared how they got their start in business to this next generation of CEOs.

Participating CEOs included: Michael Gracia, Plant Manager, Land O'Lakes; Ciaran McMullan, President/CEO, Suncrest Bank; Samantha Rummage-Mathias, General Manager, Visalia Holiday Inn & Conference Center; Jim Holley, CEO, Bank of the Sierra; Ronald Smith, President, Sterling & Smith Funeral Home; Leslie Gardner, Executive Director, Happy Trails Riding Academy and Deanne Martin-Soares, CEO, Amdal In-Home Care.

As part of the YEA! program, students were introduced to all facets of the business world including--but not limited to--advertising, insurance, graphic design and web development.

Over the course of this year's program, 13 students will launch 8 businesses, including Quick Feet Athletics, a company which has developed a motorized wrench for attaching cleats, and Momma Hannah's Bakery, an in-home bakery that will offer vegan baked goods.

As a non-profit organization, YEA! relies on the generosity of the community and of sponsors-- people who identify with entrepreneurship and want to help pave the way for the future business leaders of tomorrow.

Students from the Visalia/Tulare Young Entrepreneurs Academy met with local CEOs at College of the Sequoias in this photo from their 2014 event.

"YEA! strengthens the community, and the community strengthens YEA!," said Gayle Jagel, the Founder and CEO of the Young Entrepreneurs Academy. "Our program managers and instructors seek out people in every facet of the business community in which the program is housed, in order to help facilitate the creation of our students' dreams into a reality."

Dinner & A Show

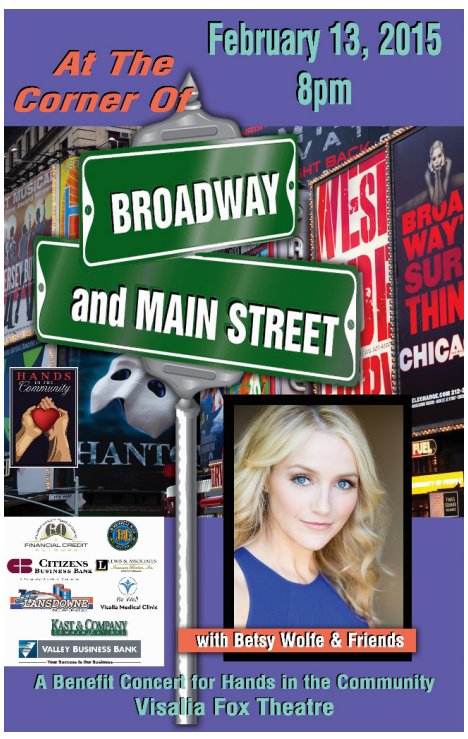
Can you imagine what it's like for children to go to bed sleeping on the floor every night? Have you been without lights or a refrigerator? What if you needed groceries, but had no way to get them? Unfortunately, these are not imaginary situations for families in Tulare/Kings County. Are you okay with this?

We care. Hands in the Community has provided volunteers who have assisted seniors, single parents and those less fortunate with assistance for more than six years. We want you to know that life is very different for many and you can help.

Betsy Wolfe, a native of Visalia, is coming home again to do a benefit concert for Hands in the Community at the historic Visalia Fox Theater on February 13, 2015. She made her Broadway debut in 2007 in 110 in the Shade, appeared with Sherie Rene Scott in Everyday Rapture, the Encores, production of Merrily We Roll Along and the 2012 Broadway revival of The Mystery of Edwin Drood.

We have also confirmed that Café 225, Little Italy, Bravo Farms, Fugazzi's (need coupon), Henry Salazar's and Tazzaria restaurants will be donating a percentage of their evening's receipts for people who patronize them on the night of the show.

We hope you can join them for dinner and then go to the concert. If you have any questions, please give us a call at (559) 625-3822.



CalChamber Releases List of New Employment Laws Affecting Businesses in 2015

Staff Reports

The California Chamber of Commerce released a list of new employment laws scheduled to take effect in 2015 that will have an impact on businesses in California. Some of the new laws for 2015, such as mandatory paid sick leave, make significant changes to California's legal landscape. Other new laws make changes to different parts of existing law or may only affect employers in specified industries, such as farming.

Unless specified, the following list of new legislation goes into effect today.

Mandatory Paid Sick Leave

The biggest news in the leaves of absence arena is mandatory paid sick leave.

AB 1522, the Healthy Workplaces, Healthy Families Act of 2014, requires employers to provide paid sick leave to any employee who worked in California for 30 days at an accrual rate of one hour for every 30 hours worked.

Employers are allowed to limit an employee's use of paid sick leave to 24 hours or three days in each year of employment and may put a maximum cap on total accrual of 48 hours or six days. The effective date for employers to begin providing the paid sick leave benefit is July 1, 2015.

The law contains many different nuances, such as detailed recordkeeping and notice requirements, including a new poster requirement. The law also contains penalties for noncompliance.

Time Off for Emergency Duty: Expanded Category

AB 2536 adds new personnel to the list of employees eligible for protected time off for emergency duty.

AB 2536 also requires an employee who is a health care provider, as defined, to notify his/her employer when he/she is designated as emergency rescue personnel and also to notify the employer at the time that the employee learns that he/she will be deployed for emergency duty.

Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation Protections

AB 1443 adds unpaid interns and volunteers to the list of individuals protected from harassment under the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA); prohibits employers from discriminating against individuals in an unpaid internship or another limited duration program to provide unpaid work experience for that person; and extends religious belief protections and religious accommodation requirements to anyone in an apprenticeship training program, an unpaid internship or any other program to provide unpaid experience for a person in the workplace or industry.

Nondiscrimination: Driver's Licenses for Undocumented Persons

AB 1660 makes it a violation of FEHA for an employer to discriminate against an individual because he/she holds or presents a driver's license issued to undocumented persons who can submit satisfactory proof of identity and California residency. Such discriminatory actions will constitute national origin discrimination under FEHA.

These driver's licenses are often referred to as "AB 60 driver's licenses," after the name of the bill passed last year. AB 60 driver's licenses are scheduled to start being issued today.

AB 1660 clarifies that actions taken by an employer that are required to comply with federal I-9 verification requirements under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) do not violate California law.

AB 1660 also provides that it is a violation of FEHA for an employer to require a person to present a driver's license, unless possessing a driver's license is required by law, or required by the employer and the employer's requirement is otherwise permitted by law.

AB 1660 further requires any driver's license information obtained by an employer to be treated as private and confidential.

Immigration-Related Protections

AB 2751 expands the definition of an unfair immigration-related practice to include threatening to file or filing a false report or complaint with any state or federal agency. Current law extended the protection only to reports filed with the police.

AB 2751 also clarifies that an employer can't discriminate against or retaliate against an employee who updates his/her personal information "based on a lawful change of name, social security number or federal employment authorization document."

Prohibition of Discrimination Against Public Assistance Recipients: Public Reports

AB 1792 prohibits discrimination and retaliation against employees receiving public assistance; which is defined as meaning the Medi-Cal program.

AB 1792 also requires state agencies to prepare an annual list of the top 500 employers with the most number of employees enrolled in a public assistance program. The reports will be made public and will be prepared starting in January 2016.

"Employer" is defined by the law as an individual or organization with more than 100 employees that are beneficiaries of the Medi-Cal program.

Harassment Prevention Training: Prevention of Abusive Conduct

AB 2053 requires employers that are subject to the mandatory sexual harassment prevention training requirement for supervisors to include a component on the prevention of "abusive conduct," beginning today. "Abusive conduct" is specifically defined by the new law.

This new law does not mean that an employee can sue for abusive conduct in the workplace unless, of course, the conduct becomes discrimination or harassment against a protected class. The law merely requires training on prevention of abusive conduct.

Harassment Prevention Training: Farm Labor Contractors

SB 1087 imposes specific sexual harassment prevention training requirements on farm labor contractors, including a yearly training requirement for supervisory employees and training for nonsupervisory employees at the time of hire and every two years thereafter. The required content for the training is not as involved as AB 1825 training.

The law also places restrictions on the ability to grant a license to a farm labor contractor who has engaged in sexual harassment, changes the exam requirements and increases licensing fees, bonding requirements and penalties.

Wage and Hour

Several new laws will increase employers' wage-and-hour obligations in 2015. Many of the new laws in the wage and hour arena deal with increasing penalties and expanding liability, instead of imposing significant new obligations on employers.

Increased Liability for Employers that Contract for Labor

AB 1897 imposes liability on employers who contract for labor. The purpose of the law is to hold companies accountable for wage-and-hour violations when they use staffing agencies or other labor contractors to supply workers.

In brief, if a labor contractor fails to pay its workers properly or fails to provide workers' compensation coverage for those employees, the "client employer" can now be held legally responsible and liable. The law contains specific definitions and exclusions.

Rest and Recovery Periods

SB 1360 confirms that recovery periods that are taken pursuant to heat illness regulations are paid breaks and count as hours worked. SB 1360 reiterates what is already in existing law in this area and was passed simply to clear up any confusion employers may have had.

Waiting Time Penalties

The labor commissioner can cite an employer who pays less than the minimum wage; the citation can include a civil penalty, restitution and liquidated damages. AB 1723 authorizes the labor commissioner to also include in this citation process any applicable penalties for an employer's willful failure to timely pay wages to a resigned or discharged employee, also called "waiting time" penalties.

The law does not create new penalties; just a new way for the labor commissioner to enforce existing penalties.

Another new law, AB 2743, provides a waiting time penalty if unionized theatrical and concert venue employers violate any agreed upon timeframe for payment of final wages contained in a collective bargaining agreement.

Protections for Complaints Under the Labor Code

AB 2751 clarifies that the $10,000 penalty against an employer who discriminates or retaliates against an employee who complains of Labor Code violations will be awarded to the employee or employees who "suffered the violation."

Timeframe for Recovery of Wages: Liquidated Damages

AB 2074 states that a lawsuit seeking to recover liquidated damages for minimum wage violations can be filed any time before the expiration of the statute of limitations that applies to the underlying wage claim, which is three years.

Some recent court cases had held that liquidated damages claims had to be filed within one year.

Child Labor Law Violations: Increased Remedies

AB 2288, the Child Labor Protection Act of 2014, provides additional penalties for violations of California laws regarding employment of minors, including a penalty of $25,000 to $50,000 for "Class A" violations involving minors 12 years of age or younger.

In addition, the statute of limitations for claims that arise from violations of employment laws is tolled, in other words, delayed or suspended, until the minor is 18 years of age.

Foreign Labor Contractors

SB 477 is noteworthy for employers that use foreign labor contractors to recruit foreign workers for California assignments. The new law, in part, requires foreign labor contractors to meet registration, licensing and bonding requirements by July 1, 2016.

Employers are prohibited from using non-registered foreign labor contractors to supply workers in California. SB 477 also imposes disclosure requirements and other obligations on foreign labor contractors. There are penalties for noncompliance and joint liability for employers who use non-registered foreign labor contractors and potential for civil action.

Prevailing Wages

A number of bills signed this year relate to prevailing wages. Employers who provide services or construction work on public works projects for the government or public entities must pay the prevailing wage, which is usually significantly higher than the minimum wage.

One notable bill, AB 1939, allows a contractor to bring an action against "hiring parties" to recover any increased costs (including labor costs, penalties and legal fees) incurred because of a determination that the work performed on the project was a covered public work and is subject to prevailing wage laws.

Another notable bill, SB 266, responds to concerns regarding delays in determining whether a project is a public works project for prevailing wage purposes.

Criminal History Information in Public Contracts

AB 1650 requires contractors who bid on state contracts involving on-site construction-related services to certify that they will not ask applicants for on-site construction-related jobs to disclose information concerning criminal history at the time of an initial employment application.

EMPLOYMENT continued on **20 »**

Photography 20”x30”

Staff Reports

Photography 20”x30” by Deborah Nolan is on display at Sue Sa’s Club House Deli located at 699 West Center Avenue, Visalia through March, 2015. Most of the 20 unaltered images are being exhibited for the first time. The collection of 20” x 30” framed prints features Nolan’s favorite natural subjects including flowers, fruits and vegetables, birds, and water.

Born in San Antonio, Texas, and raised in Long Beach, California, Nolan earned a B.A. and a M.A. in Music History from California State University, Fullerton, and a Ph.D. in Higher Education from the University of Denver. She lives in Exeter, California, and is the Distance Education and Faculty Enrichment Coordinator at College of the Sequoias, where she also teaches education and music appreciation classes.

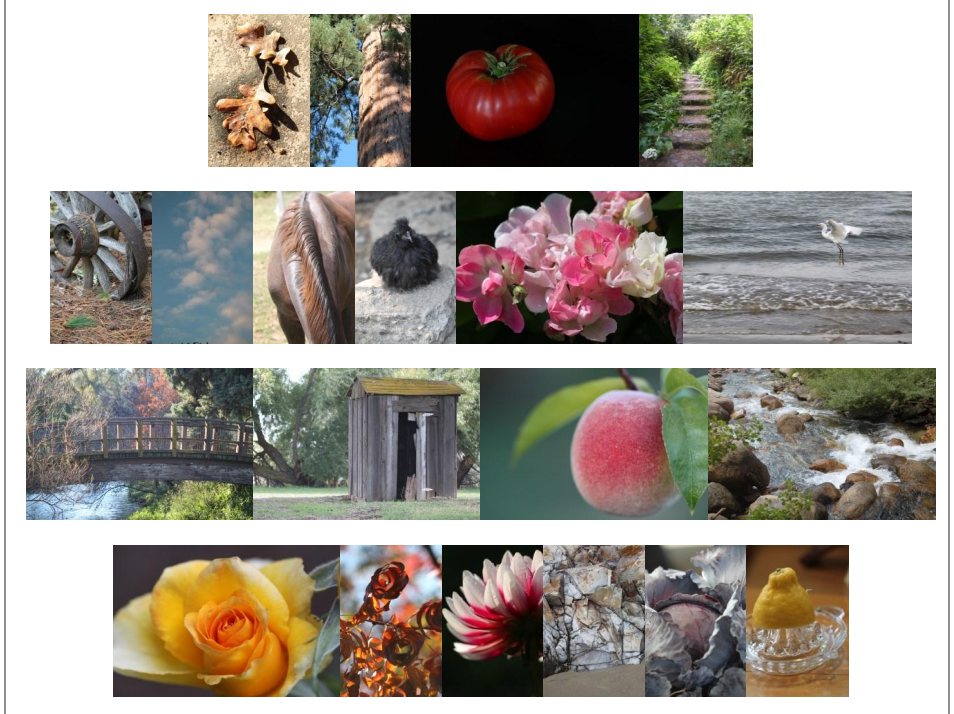
Nolan began taking pictures as a child using a Brownie Instamatic. At her grandmother’s side, she learned to love landscape photography. For many years, Nolan used film before taking a long break from photography. She eventually rekindled her love of photography and began shooting digital images about eight years ago. She revels in the freedom afforded by a digital camera and is most satisfied by macro (close-up) views.

“I seek beauty close at hand to capture and keep it, in its unaltered form, to relive the joy of it again and again. I feel what I see,” Nolan said. “For me, photography is like music where beauty is defined by its relative position within the dissonance of the environment. A beautiful melody or harmony emerges from discord, just as a satisfying photograph waits within visual chaos to be discovered, fixed in time, and shared.”

The photos in Nolan’s exhibit were taken in California, in such places as Yosemite, Sequoia National Park, Bravo Lake Botanical Gardens, Visalia Farmers’ Markets and her own backyard in Merhten Valley.

Nolan has also exhibited at Taste the Arts Visalia, the Sundstrom Fall Art Harvest and Art al Fresco in Elderwood, Arts Visalia, Quail Park, The Creative Center, Provost and Pritchard, Tulare Historical Society, Visalia Convention Center, Suncrest Bank, Michael’s Jewelry, and Café 225.

Deborah is a member of Main Gallery (maingalleryvisalia.com) and the Arts Consortium. She can be contacted at drdebnolan@gmail.com.



Eagle Mountain Casino Gives Back

Staff Reports

Throughout 2014, Eagle Mountain Casino donated thousands of dollars in sponsorships, charitable contributions and in-kind gifts to charities, individuals, businesses and non-profits within Tulare, Kern and Fresno Counties.

Some of the most notable recipients of monetary donations were: The Wounded Warriors Project, Big Brother’s Big Sisters, Bakersfield Homeless Shelter, American Cancer Society, Relay for Life, Ruiz for Kids, St. Jude, Habitat for Humanity, Porterville Adult Day Services, Helping Hands of Porterville and the Tule River Scholarship Fund.

In-kind donations, to name a few, included the City of Porterville, Porterville Peace Officers, Sierra View District Hospital, the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army.

Eagle Mountain also supported, with sponsorship, the Honor Flight for Kern County Veterans, California State University of Bakersfield, Tulare County Fair, Family Services Justice Run for Domestic Violence and the Tule River Education Center.

Theses charities and organizations have benefited from Casino revenues in order to help those less fortunate and in need. There are organizations Eagle Mountain benefits on an annual basis, and those who simply need an extra one-time boost of funds, assistance or hands-on help.

“Eagle Mountain Casino is very much honored to be able to give back to the local community,” said Public Relations Entertainment Coordinator, Rachel McDarment, “and we’re pleased to participate in the giving process throughout the year.”

Owned and operated by the Tule River Tribe, Eagle Mountain Casino is a full-service casino featuring 1200 slot machines and 9 table games.

Employment

Continued from p. 19

Services to Minors

AB 1852 requires a business that provides specified services to minors to provide a written notice to the parent or guardian of the minor receiving those services. The written notice should address the business’s policies relating to employee criminal background checks.

Penalties for Failure to Abate Safety Hazards

Cal/OSHA can require an employer to fix serious workplace safety violations and also to issue civil penalties. An employer can appeal the citation.

AB 1634, in effect, prohibits the state Occupational Safety and Health Appeals Board from modifying civil penalties for abatement or credit forabatement unless the employer has fixed the violation.

In cases of serious, repeat serious or willful serious violations, AB 1634 will generally prohibit a stay or suspension of an abatement requirement while an appeal or petition for reconsideration is pending, unless the employer can demonstrate that a stay or suspension will not adversely affect the health and safety of employees.

Email for Workplace Safety Reports

AB 326 allows employers to email their reports of a work-related serious injury, illness or death to the Division of Occupational Safety and Health. Previously, the Labor Code required an immediate report by telephone or telegraph. The reference to telegraph is removed and replaced with email.

Workplace Violence Prevention Plans: Hospitals

SB 1299 requires Cal/OSHA to adopt standards by January 1, 2016, that require specified types of hospitals, including general acute care hospitals or acute psychiatric hospitals, to adopt workplace violence prevention plans as part of the hospitals’ injury and illness prevention plans. The intent is to protect health care workers and other facility personnel from aggressive and violent behavior.

“The Great Conversation” at COS

Joseph Teller

College of the Sequoias’ “Great Conversation” discussion group is being organized to read and discuss some of the great classics of literature published by the Great Books Foundation. The readings include excerpts or complete works by writers such as Aeschylus, Montaigne, Pascal, Emerson, Whitman, Tocqueville, Ibsen, Jung, Tillie Olsen, and Alice Munro.

The Spring semester reading group will begin Monday, January 26, 2015. The group will meet every second and fourth Monday of the month from 4:00-5:30pm on the COS main campus. The book costs $24.95 through the Great Books Foundation. Contact Dr. Joseph Teller at josepht@cos.edu or at (559) 730-3924 for further information about the meeting location, the book purchase, and/or the first reading under discussion.

Open to all readers interested in great books, Great Conversation discussion groups are not lecture-based, but instead use a process of “shared inquiry.” While each discussion is led by an experienced seminar leader, discussions begin with open-ended, interpretive questions, and participants put forward their own interpretations, developing their views through the sharing of their ideas with others.

CVTEC's 2014 Tech Fair was the largest event to date.

Tulare County To Host 2015 Tech Fair

The Central Valley Technology Expo & Conference (CVTEC) is once again bringing technology information, products, and services to the underserved audience of Central California. CVTEC will take place in the City of Visalia and is open to all local governments, organizations and businesses in central California.

Central Valley Technology Expo & Conference

"Building Partnerships, The Power of Collaboration"

Thursday, January 15, 2015
8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Visalia Convention Center

Hosted by the Tulare County Information & Communications Technology Department (TCiCT), CVTEC is the only large technology conference that occurs between the cities of Sacramento and Los Angeles. TCiCT staff touts decades of experience with technology and its implementation in local government settings. CVTEC offers companies an efficient and uniquely interactive method for exhibiting and presenting their information to decision makers, as well as general attendees.

Together with TCiCT's technical knowledge and the collaboration with vendors and other governments, CVTEC will hold more than 50 sessions encompassing trainings, presentations, and panel discussions. All public sector, education and health employees are invited to attend, along with local businesses and organizations. There is no charge for attendees and they are free to view the exhibits and/or participate in the many activities and sessions at the event.

TCiCT anticipates more than 40 executive/VIP attendees and more than 400 general attendees from Central Valley county and city governments, organizations and businesses. Early registration is highly recommended in order for participants to avoid long lines on the day of the event. For more information and registration, please visit CVTEC's website at http://thecvtec.com.

Holding On To Your Car

Car Care Council

While driving a new vehicle off the lot may sound tempting, the financial commitment it brings is not an option for most families.

Instead, hanging on to your old set of wheels is the smarter choice for a number of reasons. Taking good care of your car not only improves safety and dependability, it can have a positive impact on your wallet.

"Hanging on to your current vehicle allows you to redirect money you would spend on a new car to pay off credit card debt, college loans and other bills, beef up savings or even take a road trip vacation," said Rich White, executive director with the Car Care Council. "By simply budgeting the equivalent of just one new car payment, consumers could cover an entire year's worth of basic maintenance."

Even the cost of fixing a serious engine issue is a more sensible economic decision, added White. For the cost of an average down payment on a new car or truck, a vehicle can be repowered with a remanufactured or rebuilt engine and gain years of reliable service.

"The bottom line is that a properly maintained vehicle is safer, more dependable, more fuel efficient, less polluting and more valuable," White added.

The experts at the Car Care Council offer these general tips for those looking to maintain the life of their vehicle:

1. Check all fluids, including engine oil, power steering, brake and transmission as well as windshield washer solvent and antifreeze or coolant.

2. Check hoses and belts to make sure they are not cracked, brittle, frayed, loose or showing signs of wear.

3. Check the battery and replace if necessary.

4. Check the brake system annually and have the brake linings, rotors and drums inspected at each oil change.

5. Inspect the exhaust system for leaks, damage and broken supports or hangers if there is an unusual noise.

6. Check engine performance to make sure it is delivering the best balance of power and fuel economy and producing the lowest level of emissions.

7. Check the heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) system as proper heating and cooling performance is critical for interior comfort and safety.

8. Inspect the steering and suspension system annually, including shock absorbers, struts and chassis parts, such as ball joints, tie rod ends and other related components.

9. Check the wipers and lighting so that you can see and be seen. Check that all interior and exterior lighting is working properly and replace worn wiper blades so you can see clearly when driving during precipitation.

The next time you consider purchasing a new car, think about investing in the vehicle you already own for significant savings, as well as enhanced reliability and safety. For more tips to extend the life of your car, visit www.carcare.org.

Tulare County Library to Host Urban Art Reception

A library tour of urban art pieces began with a reception January 14, inside the Visalia library, located at 200 West Oak Street.

The works will be on display in Visalia through January 21, and will then be featured at the Dinuba branch from January 21 to 28. Following the Dinuba exhibit the art will go to the county branch libraries in Woodlake, Exeter, Lindsay, Strathmore, Earlimart and Pixley, as well as Porterville and Tulare city libraries. The traveling show will finish up at Tulare County Government Plaza from April 8-15.

The exhibit consists of pieces created by California artists inspired by the Pro Youth HEART mission of reducing youth violence by giving children hope, opportunities and a safe place to be after school.

Calendar

Through January 18: Celebration Exhibit
Main Gallery Artists Betty Berk, Toni Best, Jeri Burzin, Joy Collier, Elsah Cort, Laurie Gorman, Beckie Nava, Deborah Nolan, Lynn Ramires, Deanna Saldana and Ginny Wilson are featured at Café 225. For more information, visit www.maingalleryvisalia.com or call 967-8635.

Through February 12: CORE Challenge, 12-12:45pm
Traci Dykstra will teach a class that focuses on the waistline, tightening the lower abdominals and strengthening the lower back. The $35 class meets Tuesdays and Thursdays at Anthony Community Center, Dance Studio. For information, visit liveandplayvisalia.com.

Through February 12: Intro to Boot Camp, 5:30-6:30am
Traci Dykstra and Carrie Fawkes will introduce participants to a high-energy workout interlaced with weights and resistance. The class is offered Tuesdays and Thursdays at Anthony Community Center Gym. To register, visit liveandplayvisalia.org.

Through February 17: Salsa Dance, 6:15-7:15pm
Jovita Metts and Juan Cuevas will teach salsa, the social dance that originated on the island of Cuba, at Anthony Community Center. Cost is $70 per couple of $40 per person. To register, visit liveandplayvisalia.org.

Through February 23: Morning Yoga, 7-8am
A yoga class will be offered at Whitendale Community Center in Visalia on Mondays. The cost is $35. Another class will also be offered on Thursdays. To register, visit liveandplayvisalia.org.

Through February 23: R.I.P.P.E.D., 9:30-10:30am
A high-intensity workout that combines Resistance, Interval, Power, Plyometrics, Endurance and Diet will be offered Mondays and Wednesdays at Anthony Community Center in Visalia. The cost is $35 and is open to all fitness levels. For information, visit liveandplayvisalia.com.

Through February 27: Water Conservation Contest
California Water invites teachers of grades 4-6 to create and implement a class project related to water for a chance to in an all-expense-paid trip to Channel Islands and other prizes. Teachers will have access to technical, expert and monetary support. For details, visit calwater.com/challenge.

Through February 27: Bold & Beautiful--The Art of Brenda Allison, 9am-3pm
Jon Ginsburg Gallery welcomes guest artist for January through February. The exhibit features oils, acrylics and watercolors. For information, call 733-9329.

Through February 28: Tulare County: Varied Impressions
Tulare City Historical Society will hold its annual Tulare County: Varied Impressions art exhibit in the Heritage Art Gallery, 444 W. Tulare Ave. A reception for the artists will be held from 5 to 7 pm Jan. 8. It is free. For information, call 686-2074.

Through March 14: 7th Annual Miniatures Works of Art
The Tulare City Historical Society will host this exhibition at the Tulare Historical Museum, 444 W. Tulare Ave., Tulare. The museum is open 10-4pm Thursday through Saturday.

Through March: The Photography of Deborah Nolan
Photography 20"x30" by Deborah Nolan is on display at Sue Sa's Club House Deli located at 699 West Center Avenue, Visalia.

Through June: Visalia Branch Library Teen Homework Center, 3-6:30pm
The Visalia Branch Library offers a place for teens to do their homework Tuesdays through Fridays. The library is located at 200 W. Oak St.

Through June: Tulare Public Library Homework Help
Homework help for children in grades K-12 will be available in the Tulare Public Library Learning Center on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4-7pm and Saturdays from 1-4pm.

January 15: Throwing Wise Camp, 4:30-7:30pm
Kaweah Delta will present a baseball throwing camp to teach children ages 10-15 the proper way to throw baseballs in order to prevent throwing injuries. Registrants receive a free baseball signed by Visalia Rawhide Mascot Tipper. To register, call 624-3800 or go to kaweahdelta.org/throwingwise.

January 15, 22 & 29: Tribute to Motown, 7-10pm
On Thursdays, Herb Mallory and the Crawdads are featured in a Tribute to Motown at Crawdaddys Visalia, 333 E. Main St. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

January 15, 22 & 29 – South 65 Country Rock Band – 8pm-12:30am
South 65 will perform every Thursday night at the Republik Lounge & Nightclub, 115 N. Locust St., Visalia. For information, visit facebook.com/RepublikLoungeNightclub.

January 15: YEA CEO Roundtable, 6pm
Visalia Chamber of Commerce will hold a roundtable at Tulare City Chambers, 220 E. Tulare Ave.

January 16: COS Giants Baseball Banquet Fundraiser, 5:30pm
Meet the Giants Dinner/Dance and Silent Auction, a fundraiser for the College of Sequoia's Baseball Team, will be held at the Visalia Convention Center. Tickets are $50. For information, visit baseball.cos.edu.

January 16 & 23: Preschool Storytime, 11:15am-noon
Every Friday, Preschool Storytime is held at Tulare Public Library in the Kids' Space. For information, visit tularepubliclibrary.org.

January 16, 23 & 30: Family Fun Friday, 2-5:30pm
Every Friday at the Visalia Branch Library is family night with board games, Xbox and Kinect games.

January 16: Karaoke, 6:30-8:30pm
Every Third Friday each month, Karaoke is featured at 210 Cafe. For information, call 739-9009.

January 16 to 25: The 39 Steps, 7:30pm
Visalia Players Theater Company presents "The 39 Steps," a fast-paced whodunit spoof at the Ice House Theater, 410 E Race Ave., Visalia. Matinees will be held at 2pm Jan. 11, 18 & 25. Evening performances will be Jan. 16, 17, 23 & 24 at 7:30pm. For tickets and information, visit visaliaplayers.org.

January 16 to 31: Lilies of the Field, 7:30pm
The Barn Theater in Porterville presents "Lilies of the Field," the story of a group of Catholic nuns who escape from the communist-held portion of Berlin and come to the United States. Sunday matinees are scheduled for Jan. 18, 25 and Feb. 1. For information, visit barntheater.porterville.com.

January 16: Quail Park Blood Drive, 1-4pm
A community blood drive will be held in the Wellness Center of Quail Park Retirement Village, 4520 W. Cypress Ave., Visalia. For information or to register, call 624-3503.

January 16 to March 13: Budget Meal Planning, 3-5pm
The Visalia Branch Library will offer classes on Stretching the Food Dollar every other Friday in the Blue Room. Registration is not required.

January 17: Black Bear Diner Blood Drive, 9am-1pm
Black Bear Diner will host a Central California Blood Center drive at 1161 E. Tulare Ave., Tulare. All donors will receive a free individual pie.

January 17: Tulare-Kings Writers, 10am
Tulare Kings Writers will meet at the Visalia Branch Library. Info, 280-9774.

January 17: A&W Cruise Night, 8-9pm
Every third Saturday each month, it's A&W Cruise Night featuring vintage cars. For information, call 625-1513.

January 17 & 24: Visalia Senior Center Dance, 7-10pm
Every Saturday dance to the music of Bobby Seals & The Whiskey River Band at the Visalia Senior Center, 310 N. Locust. Cost is $7 at the door. Potluck meals are held. For information, call 635-0284 or 906-6088.

January 17, 24 & 31: Kids Activities, 1-2pm
Kids' Activities takes place every Saturday in the Olympic Room of the Tulare Public Library.

January 17 &18: Visalia American Little League Registration
Signups for all divisions of the American Little League will be held at the Divisadero Snack Bar. Tryouts, for ages 7-12, will be held Jan. 17-18. Tryouts for ages 13-18 will be held in February. Registration forms and information is available at VisaliaAmericanLittleLeague.com.

January 17, 24 & 31: Training for Tax Preparers, 9am-4pm
CSET will offer a workshop for volunteer tax assistance program, which helps low-income families file their tax returns for free. The program will be held at the CSET Office 312 N.W. 3rd Ave., Visalia and 1063 W. Henderson Ave., Porterville. To volunteer, call 741-4628.

January 17 & 18: Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show, 10am-4pm
The Tule Gem & Mineral Society Gemboree will be held at the Veteran's Memorial Center, Highway 65 in Exeter. The event features 10 dealers, gems, grab bags, door prizes and silent auction. Children receive a polished rock when completing the treasure hunt.

January 17: Ekphrastic Poetry Workshop, 1:30pm
A workshop of art-inspired poetry will be held at the Visalia Branch Library. For information, call 713-2723.

January 17: Cirque Ziva, 7:30pm
Golden Dragon Acrobats will perform at the Visalia Fox Theatre. Adult tickets ($21-$29) and children's tickets ($15), are available at foxvisalia.org or by calling 625-1369.

January 17: Mike Beck, 7pm
Mike Beck will perform at Mavericks Coffee House, 238 E. Caldwell, Visalia. For information, visit mavericksccoffeehouse.com.

January 18: Tulare Historical Museum Free Admission, 12:30-4pm
Admission is free to the Tulare Historical Museum, 444 W. Tulare Ave. For information, visit tularehistoricalmuseum.org.

January 18: PFLAG Meeting, 3-5pm
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays Tulare & Kings County meets on the third Sunday each month at the Educational and Cultural Center, Congregation B'nai David, 1039 S. Chinowth, Visalia. For information, visit www.pflag-tulare-kings.org.

January 19: MLK Day Celebration, 10am
The Hanford Branch of the NAACP will hold the 9th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration at Hanford Civic Auditorium. A processional march around Civic Plaza and music, readings and guest speakers are featured. Congressman David G. Valadao will be the keynote speaker.

January 19 & 20: Scrub and Shoe Sale
Kaweah Delta Hospital Guild will present a Scrub and Shoe Sale by Life Uniforms in the Blue Room of the basement of Kaweah Delta Hospital, 400 W. Mineral King. Proceeds will benefit patient care equipment purchases. The event will be held from 7am to 4pm Jan. 19 and from 6:30am to 4pm Jan 20. For information, call 734-3109.

January 20: KDHCD Service Awards Banquet
Kaweah Delta Health Care District will present its Service Awards Banquet at Visalia Convention Center.

January 20: League of Women Voters meeting, 11:45am
The League of Women Voters of Tulare County will meet Tuesday, January 20 at 11:45 am. in Sue Sa's Club House, 699 W. Center, Visalia. The Speaker will be Doug Johnson, of the National Demographics Corporation, explaining ways to divide the city equitably into required Districts for representatives on the Visalia City Council. Mr. Johnson is President of NDC and his consulting firm will aid in setting up districts to be adopted by the city for the 2016 election. A fixed price luncheon for $13 inc. tax and tip will be served. The public is welcome. Reservations are required by calling 732-1251

January 20: Integrity Credit Ribbon Cutting, 10am
Visalia Chamber of Commerce will hold a ribbon-cutting for Integrity Credit at 518 N. Locust St. For information, call 734-5876.

January 20 & 27: Toddler Time, 10-11am
Every Tuesday, Tulare County Public Library, Visalia Branch offers a special time for toddlers up to age 2, to play and interact with one another while building literacy skills. For information, call 685-4503.

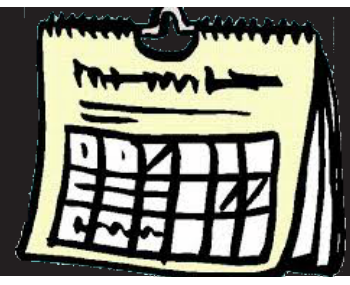
January 20 & 27: Kindergarten Readiness Storytime, 6:15-6:45pm
Every Tuesday evening, Kindergarten Readiness Storytime is held at Tulare Public Library, 475 North M Street, in the Kids' Space. For information, visit tularepubliclibrary.org.

January 21 to 24: Guys & Dolls
El Diamante High School will perform the classic "Guys and Dolls" musical. For information, visit www.vusd.org/MtWhitney.cfm.

January 21: Labor Law Compliance Series, 7-10am
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with Pacific Employers, will present the state-mandated Supervisors' Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Seminar & Workshop at the Lamp Liter Inn. Registration & Breakfast 7:30-8 am; Seminar 8-10am. Reservations required. For more information call the Chamber, 734-5876, or visit visaliachamber.org.

January 21: Central Valley Horror Club, 7pm
The Central Valley Horror Club meets on the third Wednesday of each month at The Planning Mill Artisan Pizzeria, 513 E. Center Ave., Visalia, to enjoy a free movie and $10 all-you-can-eat pizza. For information, visit facebook.com/centralvalleyhorrorclub.

January 21 & 28: Medicare Extra Help, 1-4pm
Every Wednesday, Tulare Senior Center offers free counseling for Medicare beneficiaries. Help with prescription plans, claims, appeals and general information. This program is spon-



sored by Kings/Tulare AAA HICAP. Appointments available by calling 623-0199.

January 21: Spinal Cord Injury Support Group, 6:30-7:30pm
The Spinal Cord Injury Support Group meets on the third Wednesday of each month at Kaweah Delta Rehabilitation Hospital, 840 S. Akers St. For information, visit KaweahDelta.org.

January 21: Mystery Readers Book Club, 6:30-8pm
The book club will meets on the third Wednesday of each month at the Visalia Branch Library, 200 W. Oak St. For information, call 713-2709.

January 21: 2015 Pistachio Day Conference, 8am-4:30pm
The statewide Pistachio Day Conference will be held at the Visalia Convention Center. The event is designed to deliver the latest research-based production practices. Registration is $40 before Jan. 5, $60 after and $80 at the door. For information, visit ucanr.edu/sites/pistachioday.

January 21 & 28: Open Mic Night, 7:30-9:30pm
Ronnie Nix will lead open mic night at Farmer's Fury Tasting Room, 358 West D Street, Lemoore, every Wednesday evening. For information, visit farmersfurywines.com.

January 22: Oakland Raiders Boosters Meeting, 7pm
Tulare Kings Counties Oakland Raiders Boosters meet on the second and fourth Thursdays each month at Elks Lodge, 3100 W. Main St., Visalia.

January 22: The Great Wine vs. Beer Showdown, 5:30pm
An evening of wine and beer tasting, appetizers and music will raise funds to support the Farm Bureau. The event will be held at the Hanford Civic Auditorium. Tickets, $50, available at brownpapertickets.com/event/925493.

January 22 & 29: Woodlake Kids' Club, 3-5:15pm
The Kids' Club meets every Thursday at Woodlake Presbyterian and includes snacks, classes, singing, Bible lessons and optional homework time. A separate program for sixth graders is also held. For information, visit woodlakefoundation.org.

January 23: Lemoore Chamber of Commerce Banquet
Bob Clement, FAST Credit Union and Kings Lions Club will be among those honored at the chamber's installation and awards banquet. Reservations must be made by Jan. 16. Tickets, $50 or $450 for a table of 8, can be purchased by calling 924-6401.

January 23 to 25: The GSSA Championships
The Golden Sate Spirit Association will hold a two-day competition featuring all divisions for all star cheer, school, rec and dance teams at the Visalia Convention Center.

January 24: 5th Annual Tule Fog 5K/10K Run, 7am
Visalia Parks and Recreation kicks off the New Year with the famous Tule Fog along St. John's River. More than 500 runners compete every year in male and female divisions. Participants who sign up by Jan. 15 are guaranteed a long-sleeved race shirt. Cost to enter is $25/$35 after Jan. 14. For information, visit liveandplayvisalia.com.

January 24: Toddler Time, 11:15am
The Tulare Public Library will offer time for toddlers on the fourth Saturday of each month in the Olympic Room. Parents are encouraged to bring toddlers aged 18-36 months to play and grow together.

January 24: Stage Life, 8-10pm
Stage Life will perform at The Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St., Visalia. Tickets for the 21+ concert are $5.

January 24: Public Stargazing, 7-10pm
Join the Tulare Astronomical Association for a night of observing the moon, planets, and deep space objects at Arthur Pursell Observatory. The event will include a short program on astronomical objects of interest for the evening, a tour of the constellations, and viewing through TAA's 12" Astrola reflecting telescope inside the observatory dome. Please check our website for important event information before leaving for the observatory.

January 26: Great Books, 4-5:30pm
College of the Sequoias' "Great Conversation" discussion group is being organized to read and discuss some of the great classics of literature. Beginning January 26, the group will meet every second and fourth Monday afternoon, 4:00-5:30pm, on the COS main campus. The book costs $24.95 through the Great Books Foundation. Contact Dr. Joseph Teller at josepht@cos.edu or at (559) 730-3924 for further information.

January 27: Teen Game Night, 5-7pm
Teen Game Night for ages 13-19 is the last Tuesday of each month in the Tulare Public Library Charter Room. For information, visit tularepubliclibrary.org.

January 27: Independent Film Series, 6-7:45 pm
The Visalia Branch Library will host a film in the Blue Room. For information, call 713-2723.

January 28: Crafty Corner: Knit and Crochet Group, 10:30am-12pm
Learn and practice fiber arts on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at Visalia Branch Library. For information, call 713-2703.

January 28: Cooking on the Fly, 6:30pm
The Tulare County Library will hold Cooking on the Fly, a presentation on what can be done when the pantry holds little butstaples and there's no time or money to shop for food.

January 28: COS Blood Drive, 10am-3pm
A blood drive will be held at the College of the Sequoias in Visalia. Donors will receive a free t-shirt.

January 29: Last Thursday Book Club, 6pm
The Tulare Public Library Last Thursday Book Club will meet.

January 29: 7th Annual Project Homeless Connect
A one-day event designed to provide housing, services and a forum will be held at four locations in Tulare county: Pentecostal Church of God, 323 E. 11th St., Hanford; Commission Honorifica Building, 466 E. Putnam Ave., Porterville; TDES Hall, 515 North I Street, Tulare; and Veteran's Memorial Building, 609 W. Center Ave., Visalia. Volunteers are needed. For information, visit kingstularecoc.org/projects/2015-phc-event.

January 29: Local Motion Awards Luncheon, 11:30am
The Tulare County Association of Governments will hold its 4th Annual Local Motion Awards Luncheon at the Visalia Convention Center. Registration is $35, or $45 after Jan. 4. For information, visit tularecog.org.

January 30: Rotary Foundation Dinner, 5pm
Rotary District 5230 will hold its "Million Dollar Dinner" at the Visalia Convention Center. Proceeds will benefit The Rotary Foundation. For tickets and information, visit rotary5230.org.

January 30: Family Game Night, 5pm
Tulare Public Library Family Game Night is held on the last Friday of each month in the Olympic Room.

January 30: Kings Art Center reception, 5:30-7:30pm
A reception for two new exhibits will be held. Dale Laitinen's paintings will be on display in the Marcellus Gallery, while Drawings by Bridgette Cervantes will be shown in the Members Gallery. Both exhibits, beginning January 31, run until March 21.

January 31 & February 7: 2015 Kings County Academic Decathlon, 7:30am
A contest of academic strength among students from Kings County high schools will be held. To volunteer as a judge, call 589-7074.

January 31: Sci/Fi Book Club, 1pm
Tulare Public Library Sci/Fi Book Club meets on the last Saturday each month. For information, visit tularepubliclibrary.org.

January 31: VUSD Winter Formal
The Visalia Unified School District will hold the Winter Formal at the Visalia Convention Center. Tickets can be purchased at each high school's finance office.

January 31: Anime Visalia, 10am-4pm
Anime Visalia meets on the last Saturday of each month at the Visalia Branch Library, 200 W. Oak St. For information, visit facebook.com/AnimeVisalia.

January 31: Youth Registration Discount Day, 10am-12pm
Register early to receive a $10 discount on Visalia Parks and Recreation Youth Baseball and Spring Youth Volleyball. Register online at liveandplayvislia.com or at Anthony Community Center, 345 N. Jacob St.

January 31: Flip Schultz, 8-10pm
SNV Foundation will present comedian Flip Schultz along with performances by Allison Weber and Greg G. Williams at The Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St., Visalia. Tickets, $21, are available at snvfoundation.org.

FEBRUARY

February 3 to March 24: Teen Fiction Writers' Workshop, 4-5:30pm
Local author Janet Nichols Lynch will conduct a Tulare County Office of Education Workshop on Tuesdays at 7000 Doe Ave., Suite A, Visalia. Students, grades 7-12, may apply by submitting a short story or novel except, 500 to 3,000 words, to janetl@ersconnect.org. The deadline for submissions is Jan. 16.

February 4: The Second City 55th Anniversary Tour, 7:30pm
Art Beat, Inc. presents "A Lively Arts Series" at the Visalia Fox Theatre. The Second City sketch and comedy club produced such leading comedians as John Belushi, Bill Murray, John Candy, Mike Myers and more. A night of comedy, songs and improv are featured. Tickets, $22-$32, are available at FoxVisalia.org.

February 5: Groundbreaking, 3-4pm
Fire Station 53 will officially begin life at its 3pm groundbreaking at Atwood and Walnut Avenue. A brief program will be held followed by the commemorative "breaking of the ground." Light refreshments will be available

February 5 to 7: Mary Poppins, the Musical
Based on the beloved books by P.L. Travers and music from the Disney Movie starring Julie Andrews, "Mary Poppins" will be performed by Redwood High School. For information, visit www.vusd.org.

February 6: Tulare-Kings Counties Mass Choir, 6pm
Tulare-Kings Counties Mass Choir presents its Silver Anniversary 25th Annual Gospel Music Concert and Gala at the Visalia Fox. Tickets, $15-25, are available at foxvisalia.org.

February 6 to 21: Winnie the Pooh
The Enchanted Playhouse presents "Winnie and Assorted Friends." The play will be held on Friday and Saturday at 7pm, and Sunday at 2pm at Main Street Theatre, 307 E. Main, Visalia. For information, visit enchantedplayhouse.org.

February 6: T.J. Maxx Blood Drive, 11am-2pm
A Central California Blood Center drive will be held at T.J. Maxx, 3040 N. Dinuba Blvd., Visalia. Special rewards coupons will be given to all donors.

February 6: Women's 7 on 7 Soccer Registration Deadline
The deadline to register for the Visalia Spring Women's 7 on 7 Soccer League is Feb. 6. The league starts Feb. 15. To register visit liveandplayvisalia.com.

February 7: EUHS 10 Year Class Reunion, 6pm
The Exeter Union High School class of 2004 will be celebrating its 10-year reunion at the Stag Saloon. Festivities include dinner, drinks and music. Tickets, $20, available at brownpapertickets.com/event/885633.

February 7: Mary Immaculate Queen School Dinner, 6pm
A gourmet meal, entertainment, dancing and a diamond drawing will be featured at the MIQ school fundraiser. The event will be held at Harris Ranch Restaurant Grand Ballroom, 24505 W. Dorris Ave., Coalinga. Tickets, $200, are available at the school, 884 N. Lemoore Ave., or by calling 924-3424.

February 7: 38th Annual Crab Feed, 6pm
The Rotary Club of Hanford will hold its annual crab feed to raise money for its youth and scholarship programs. In addition to dinner, a '70s-theme dance will be held at Hanford Civic Auditorium. Tickets are $75. For information, visit facebook.com/RotaryClubHanford.

February 7: Throwing Wise, 1-3pm
Kaweah Delta Health Care District will host a sports camp on Saturday, February 7, to help student athletes and their parents learn how to prevent throwing injuries. The Throwing Wise Camp--for athletes aged 10-15--will take place from 1-3pm at Visalia Rawhide Stadium, 300 N. Giddings Street, is limited to the first 150 student athletes to register at www.kaweahdelta.org/throwingwise. Cost is $25 per athlete. Attendees will receive a free baseball and have it signed by Rawhide mascot and Holstein Bull par excellence, Tipper.

February 10: California Department of Education Conference, 8:45am
The California Department of Education, in partnership with the Tulare County Office of Education, will host a Central California conference entitled Launching the 2014 English Language Arts/English Language Development (ELA/ELD) Framework. For more information, call 651-3831.

February 11: Wellness $ You: Heart Valve Disease, 5:30-6:30pm
Drs. Leheb Araim and Philip Faraci, cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon respectively, will give a presentation at the Kaweah Delta Multiservice Center, 402 W. Acequia Avenue in Visalia.

Sports

Persevering by Staying Active

Stefan Barros

Golden West High School junior Taylor Stainbrook is a volleyball player who has persevered a great deal to get to where she is right now - she has had to, because she has a heart condition called POTS Syndrome.

POTS, which stands for Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome, is condition that Stainbrook has dealt with since her diagnosis in September, 2013. In her case, POTS slows the heart rate upon standing and often results in light-headedness and even fainting.

Stainbrook says that even though the diagnosis was shocking to her, she definitely knew that something was wrong, just from her symptoms.

"I would get bad headaches," she said. "My hands would get clammy and I even passed out a couple times."

Of the many challenges that an athlete with POTS faces, Stainbrook explained her biggest disadvantage of competing with this.

"It's just different from what all the other players have to go through. I get tired a lot faster," she said.

But inactivity is not an option. Stainbrook continued, "I'm better when I just keep playing. If I rest and then get back into a game, that's when I'm really affected."

It never occurred to Stainbrook to give up on volleyball after her diagnosis. In fact, to remedy her symptoms, she wanted to make sure she was as active as possible.

Taylor Stainbrook

"The doctor never told me that I couldn't play, so I just wanted to keep on playing. I wanted to stay as active as possible through this with little downtime," she said.

As for actually playing on the court, one would imagine that her condition would be a distraction. Not so, says Stainbrook, "When I'm out there it doesn't cross my mind at all."

Throughout this ordeal, Stainbrook has received support from everyone around her, including her family, teachers and friends.

"My friends have always been there for me," she said, "and they know how to cheer me up."

At present, Stainbrook is limiting herself to volleyball, before her diagnosis, however, she was involved in other sports at Golden West.

"Right now, it's just volleyball, but I used to play basketball. Now that I have a pacemaker, I can't be involved in contact sports," she said.

A pacemaker is a small device placed on the chest to help control abnormal heart rhythms.

When it comes to POTS, there can varying levels of severity. In Stainbrook's case it can considered both mild and severe. She described her condition as being up and down.

"The symptoms now are touch and go. Sometimes the symptoms are worse than other times," she said. "It is not always consistent."

Stainbrook is a little surprised by how much she has been able to do following her diagnosis, citing the examples of a couple of people she knows who also have POTS.

"These other girls I know weren't able to do anything after their diagnosis. Going to school was really tough for them to do," she said.

As for POTS' effect on her schoolwork, Stainbrook she says that it was really tough right after her initial diagnosis, but it has gotten better over time. "At first I had to miss a lot of days because of this with doctor's visits, but I was still able to keep good grades."

Stainbrook sees herself playing volleyball after high school. She isn't sure where, but wants to keep playing. "I really want to play volleyball in college. It's and wait see kind of thing, though."

Then there's Stainbrook's future with POTS. Many people see deteriorating symptoms, some even losing the symptoms as time goes on, and it's not the same for everyone. But Stainbrook believes her symptoms will lessen, saying, "The symptoms I have could last for 2-5 more years."

Three Giants' World Series Trophies to Visit Porterville

As part of its three-month public sojourn, the San Francisco Giants' World Championship Trophy Tour presented by Bank of America will visit Porterville on February 25. Porterville College, located at 100 East College Avenue, will serve as host to the viewing, which takes place between 4 and 6pm.

The 2010, 2012 and 2014 Major League Baseball's Commissioner's Trophies, crafted by Tiffany & Co. and won by the San Francisco Giants, will be on display to celebrate the World Series Champions' dynasty-making victory with devoted Giants fans in Junior Giants communities throughout northern and central California, Oregon and Nevada, and to help raise funds and awareness for the Junior Giants program.

This will be the third public trophy tour held in the past five years. The viewing of the trophies is free to the public, but a voluntary contribution of $2 per person is suggested to support the local Junior Giants program.

Junior Giants is the flagship program of the Giants Community Fund, which serves more than 22,000 boys and girls in 87 underserved communities throughout northern and central California and southern Oregon. It is a free and non-competitive baseball program that has served as a model for MLB youth initiatives. Using baseball, the Junior Giants provides opportunities for youth to link with adult mentors and to learn about the program's Four Bases of Character Development: Confidence, Integrity, Leadership and Teamwork.

The Junior Giants program has been running in Porterville for six years, and many of its participants would not normally have the opportunity--or means--to play baseball.

To learn more: Please visit sfgiants.com/trophy or www.ci.porterville.ca.us. You can also follow @SFGiants on Twitter and tag Tweets and photos with #SFGTrophy.

Tulare-Kings All Star Football Coaches Named

Staff Reports

Although the local football season is now finished, there is still one more game to look forward to in the South Valley. The 48th annual Tulare-Kings All Star game is slated for June, and the coaches have been named.

Organized by members of Lemoore Kiwanis and Visalia Optimists, the game is a longtime rivalry between the top high school senior players of the year. The coaches are generally those who have lead their teams to a great record.

"We have multiple coaches who have had a great year," said Robert Clement, one member of the organizing committee.

Clement stressed that choosing each head coach is the decision of the entire committee.

For the West team, Shannon Pulliam, coach of Lemoore High School was chosen. His team won the West Yosemite League in Division II with a record of 11-1.

Shannon Pulliam

This is the third year Pulliam, who is also a physical education teacher, has served as head coach in Lemoore. Previously, he had more than eight years as a head coach and more than 12 years as an assistant coach.

Pulliam himself played as a linebacker while at Clovis High School, Fresno City College and Boise State University.

"It's a great honor, when asked to take on an All Star team," he said. "We're looking forward to it."

Pulliam will have members of his Lemoore coaching staff assist with the All Star team. He looks forward to not only coaching a couple members of the Lemoore team one more time, but also many of the players he has watched play against them.

"It's good to get to know these kids, personally. It's kind of a nice closing and it's fitting," he said.

Mason Hughes

Named for the East team is Central Valley Christian's head coach, Mason Hughes.

CVC posted a record of 11-2 this season in the Central Sequoia League, Division IV. This was Hughes' seventh season as head coach there, where he also teaches economics and personal finance.

Hughes played a little football while in high school, he said."But, I wasn't that good," he said.

That didn't deter his love for the game, as well as other sports, and he began coaching while in college.

"I'm proud and excited," he said, "to have been chosen (as head coach for the All Star team), means your team is really good."

Hughes looks forward to coaching some of his seniors for one last time, as well as members from other teams.

Usually, there are only a couple of weeks practice before the June All Star game.

"Generally, we will want to make sure we get in shape and that everyone learns the plays," Hughes said. "We want them to feel confident in what they are doing."

Hughes and Pulliam will choose their players with the help of their coaching staff. The names will be announced once the graduating seniors accept their positions for the teams. The location of the All Star game will also be named at that time.

Report Reveals Almost 50% of Californians are Struggling or Disenfranchised

Staff Reports

Measure of America (MOA) released *A Portrait of California 2014-2015*, its second California Human Development Report measuring well-being and access to opportunity for residents across the Golden State using the American Human Development Index (HD Index), a composite measure of health, education and earnings. MOA is a nonpartisan initiative that seeks to provide insight beyond U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This year's report has a special focus on California's children.

Using the HD Index, *A Portrait of California* ranks the state's ten most populous metro areas from lowest to highest using a single number on a scale from 0 to 10; San Jose is at the top with an HD Index score of 7.08 while Bakersfield is at the bottom with a score of 3.69. The report also ranks the well-being of major racial and ethnic groups (Asian Americans rank highest at 7.39, while Latinos rank the lowest at 4.09); gender groups (women and men rank fairly evenly, though men are far ahead in earnings); native and foreign-born residents (native-born residents outrank foreign-born residents by almost a full point); and neighborhood clusters (Mountain View, Palo Alto and Los Altos in Santa Clara top the list at 9.26, and the South Central and Watts neighborhoods of Los Angeles are at the bottom at 2.14).

"If California were a country, its robust economy would qualify it for a seat at the G8. What happens in this state has national and even international significance," said Sarah Burd-Sharps, co-author of *A Portrait of California*. "That's why it's concerning to uncover that there are in fact five Californias – five starkly different levels of well-being that Californians are experiencing, ranging from the thriving 1% to the struggling and disenfranchised, who comprise nearly half of the population."

"The American Human Development Index reveals mutually reinforcing inequalities in health, education, standard of living, environment, neighborhood conditions and wealth that have created an opportunity divide in our society that higher wages alone cannot bridge," added Kristen Lewis, co-author of *A Portrait of California*. "This comprehensive, actionable metric provides insight on how best to secure the future well-being and opportunity of California's residents, namely by preventing problems from taking root in the early stages of childhood, by helping parents, and by investing in our children."

A Portrait of California sorts neighborhoods into "Five Californias" according to where they fall along the HD Index 10-point scale:

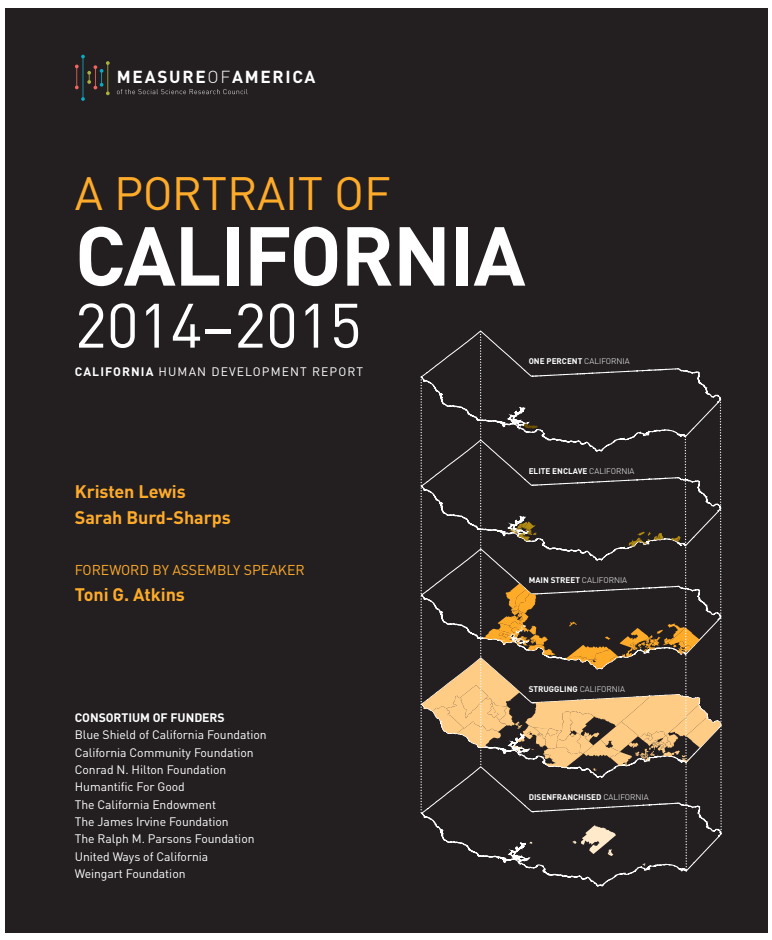
One Percent California, HD Index score of 9.28, comprises the top 1% of the state's population in terms of well-being. Adults in this category are highly educated, highly paid professionals fueling the innovation economy and living primarily within six Santa Clara County towns: Mountain View, Palo Alto, Los Altos, Cupertino, Saratoga and Los Gatos. The median household income is $114,000 and life expectancy for this group is 86.2 years, five years longer than for the average Californian. One in three residents of One Percent California is foreign-born. Children from this grouping typically grow up with two parents with their needs for optimal development largely met. Despite its overall high score, however, it is important to note that pockets of poverty exist within Silicon Valley.

Elite Enclave California, HD Index score of 7.84, accounts for 15% of the state's population. They are predominantly affluent, educated professionals who reside in upscale urban and suburban neighborhoods of the state's major cities. The good schools, safety, cultural amenities, easy commutes, prestige and neighborhood aesthetics that characterize this California come with a price tag that is out of reach for most people. The vast majority of children in this group bypass the types of hardships that impair child development and threaten future wellbeing.

Main Street California, HD Index score of 5.95, accounts for 39% of the state's population. This group of Californians experience longer lives, higher levels of educational attainment, and higher earnings than the typical American. Main Street California is majority minority. After housing, childcare is the biggest expense for a family with two children. These costs have risen dramatically over the past 20 years, but wages have remained flat since the mid-1970s, forcing this group to make trade-offs among necessities.

Struggling California, HD Index score of 4.10, makes up 42% of the population across the state, from the suburbs, exurbs and rural areas of the Central Valley to parts of major metro areas and the Inland Empire to swaths of Northern California. One in three children live in poverty, 37% of households with children are single-parent, and 18% of young people are neither working nor in school.

Disenfranchised Californians, HD Index score of 2.54, comprise the final 3% of residents. This group is largely excluded from the formal economy,
and left behind in socially isolated and often stigmatized neighborhoods in Los Angeles and rural and urban areas in San Joaquin Valley. Seventy-one percent are Latino, one third is foreign-born, and nearly half of children live in poverty. This population faces innumerable impediments to living freely chosen lives of dignity and fulfillment.



Other Key Findings

Health – From 2000–2012, life expectancy in California increased by 2.8 years to 81.2 years, longer than the national average. The range of life spans in neighborhoods is nearly a dozen years; residents in parts of Santa Clara County, on average, live the longest (87 years), while residents of Twentynine Palms and Barstow in San Bernardino County live the shortest (75.3 years). African American men have the lowest life expectancy due to premature death rates related to heart disease, homicide, and cancer.

Education – If every California adult were immediately elevated by one education level (e.g. those with a high school diploma had an associate degree), nearly 1 million fewer residents would live in poverty, 1,200 fewer residents would be murdered each year, and 2.4 million more Californians would vote.

The number of adults without a high school diploma fell from 23.2% in 2000 to 18.5% in 2012.

Latinos have the lowest education score, lagging in school enrollment for residents ages 3 to 24 and the proportion of adults who've completed high school, a bachelor's degree, or a graduate degree.

Earnings – California's agriculture feeds the nation, but the state's crop workers struggle to put food on the table, with annual earnings that range from $15,000 to $17,500. Median earnings for workers in Fresno ($23,000) are slightly less than half what the typical worker in the San Jose metro area earns ($42,000). White men out-earn white women by almost $18,000 – for Asian Americans, this gap is approximately $10,000, and for Native Americans, $4,000, both also in favor of men.

A Portrait of California highlights actions that Californians can take to lock in human development successes today while setting the stage for significant budget savings and improved wellbeing tomorrow. These include changes in neighborhoods, schools, workplaces and governments to reduce the disparities in health, education and earnings that divide Californians today; collaboration amongst institutions, agencies, advocates and groups with a stake in the future of the state; and improving the lives of children and those who care for them.

For more information, visit: www.measureofamerica.org.

E Street

Continued from p. 17

become a popular community meeting place, with coffee drinks, sandwiches, desserts and free Wi-Fi on offer.

The Wildflower, is located next to the famous mural of an orange grove The Wildflower, open Monday through Saturday from 6:30am to 4pm, and from 8am to 3pm on Sundays. Every Friday night starting in April, dinner will be served there. Across E Street from the Wildflower is TCBY Yogurt, open from 11am to 10pm. Just Sprouted Juice Bar & Healthy Cafe, at 114 North E Street, is open Monday through Saturday, 9am to 5pm.

Cafe Lafayette is open every night for dinner, Tuesday through Saturday, 5:30 to 9pm, and for lunch between 11:30am and 2:30pm. The restaurant has live music every Friday and Saturday night and will be opening up for Sunday brunch in the spring.

Sleepy little rural town? Not bustling Exeter. Not on E Street. There are plenty of places to dine.

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Health

Flu Making Its Way into South Valley

Nancy Vigran

While the flu has hit epidemic proportions in the U.S., according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) it has yet to reach its peak, especially in the West Coast. California generally is on the tail end of the flu timeline, and cases are on the rise and will worsen well into February.

"It's not quite as widespread as the rest of the country, but we are seeing the flu," said Dr. Karen Haught, a physician with the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency.

Vaccinations remain the first line of defense for combating the flu, Haught said. And, it is still a good idea to be vaccinated, if not already, especially for children and those older than 50.

"Vaccinations should be given to all children six months of age and older," she said. "And, it is best for infants to have protection from those around them being vaccinated."

The most prevalent strain of flu this season is the H3N2, which is responsible for the deaths of 36 children in various states including California, according to the CDC. Current vaccines are not totally formulated to recent changes in that strain, but will definitely fight off other strains and reduce the symptoms of H3N2, a CDC source stated on its website.

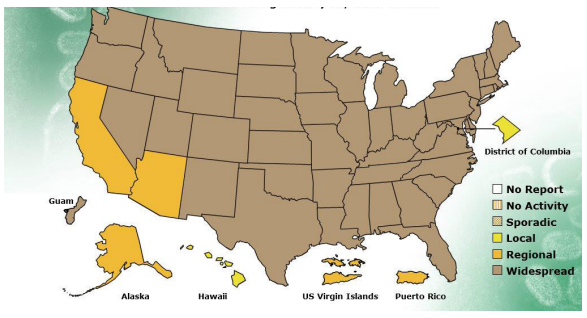
Usually there are up to four different strains of flu that circulate any given year, Haught said. The current vaccination still provides protection for the other three strains and helps protect for a milder case of H3N2, she said.

There is an increase in antivirals, such as Tamiflu, being prescribed. It is important that this is started as soon as the flu is detected.

"If started early in the illness, it can shorten the length of the illness and minimize the overall severity," Haught said.

This is even more important for those who have underlying medical conditions such as heart disease, lung issues or diabetes, she added.

A plus for antivirals is that there is not the concern for overuse, as there is for antibiotics, the CDC source stated. If taken this year, it can again be prescribed and should help again next year.



Flu activity estimates by state, courtesy of the CDC.

Flu symptoms include:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

Not everyone has the same symptoms, and it is important to recognize when the symptoms are not a cold, but the flu.

Prevention for contracting the flu beyond vaccination includes avoiding contact with those who may have the flu, frequent hand washing, keeping rested and eating healthy.

If diagnosed with the flu, that individual should stay home whenever possible, and cover their mouth when coughing or sneezing.

"If it starts, just stay home," Haught said.

Vaccinations are available through TCHHS offices, Kings County Health & Welfare offices, private medical care providers and pharmacies. Many providers accept Medicare, MediCal and private insurance. For more information call the TCHHS at 624-8000; KCHW at 584-1401; or your private medical care provider.

Kaweah Delta's new Dinuba health clinic.

Kaweah Delta Opens New Rural Clinic

Kaweah Delta Health Care District's fourth rural health clinic opened on January 9, to serve patients in Dinuba.

The 5000 square-foot clinic, located at 855 West Monte Vista Drive, is open from 8am to 5pm on weekdays but closed for lunch between12-1pm. With 12 exam rooms, the clinic will provide patients with family medicine, pediatric care and women's health services. Later this year, the clinic will expand to offer specialty services such as bio-behavioral health services and adult specialty care including cardiology, dermatology, gastrointestinal care and more. Providing care at the clinic will be Physician Assistant Lourdes Oliveros and Jose Campos, M.D. The center's medical director is Ashraf Ghaly, M.D.

"Our goal is to make specialty services available to this community so that people do not have to leave the area for care," said Dave Garrett, Kaweah Delta Director of Outpatient Health Clinics.

At 8am on January 14, the Dinuba Chamber of Commerce presented Good Morning Dinuba, hosting a ribbon cutting for the clinic.

Kaweah Delta's rural health clinics also include:

- Exeter Health Clinic, 1014 San Juan Ave., Exeter
- Lindsay Health Clinic, 839 N. Sequoia Ave., Lindsay
- Woodlake Health Clinic, 180 E. Antelope Ave., Woodlake

Kaweah Delta to Host Heart Heart-to-Heart

If you struggle with shortness of breath, fatigue, chest pain, dizziness or leg swelling, you may have heart valve disease. It's a disease that causes one or more heart valves to work improperly. Unfortunately, sometimes a person experiences no symptoms at all.

With heart month just a few weeks away, January is a great time to ask yourself about your health and ask: Have I ever experienced any of these symptoms and, if so, what should I do? To find any heart condition early, particularly heart valve disease, is an opportunity to fix it and significantly improve a person's life expectancy, rather than waiting for symptoms of heart failure to surface.

February 11: 5:30-6:30 PM
Wellness & You: Heart Valve Disease

Speakers: Drs. Leheb Araim and Philip Faraci, cardiovascular and thoracic surgeons.

Time: 5:30-6:30pm

Location: Kaweah Delta Multiservice Center, 402 W. Acequia Ave., in Visalia

It's a popular option to treat heart valve disease, says Dr. Philip Faraci, a Visalia cardiac surgeon, on staff at Kaweah Delta Medical Center.

"We can avoid breaking bone to get to the heart and make smaller incisions that allow a person to heal more quickly and comfortably," said Faraci.

Instead of an 8- to 10-inch incision, a surgeon performing minimally-invasive heart valve surgery can use incisions half that size to replace or repair malfunctioning valves or restore normal function to a person's heart, Faraci said. Smaller incisions result in less bleeding, helping patients get up and about sooner, out of the hospital and home more quickly. Ultimately, the surgery can help preserve the function of heart muscle and result in improved quality of life, prolonged life, and reduced symptoms.

"This is a huge opportunity for this community," Faraci said.

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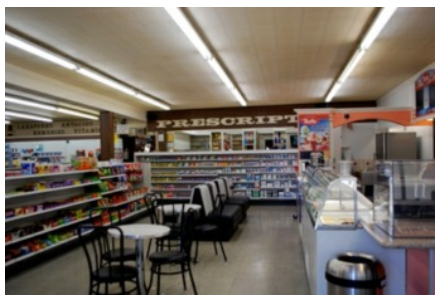

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Kaweah Delta Set to Host Throwing Wise Camp for Student Athletes

Kaweah Delta Health Care District will host a sports camp on Saturday, February 7, to help student athletes and their parents learn how to prevent throwing injuries.

Participants will receive coaching on warm-up techniques and throwing, strengthening, and pitching mechanics. Instructors will include Chamberlain Baseball Academy coaches and Therapy Specialists Professionals. While students receive instruction, parents will attend a lecture on common throwing injuries and preventative throwing mechanics by sports medicine physicians Dr. Ian Duncan, Dr. Don Schengel, Dr. David Surdyka, Dr. Bruce Le and Therapy Specialists, a division of Kaweah Delta Health Care District.

The Throwing Wise Camp--for athletes aged 10-15--will take place from 1-3pm at Visalia Rawhide Stadium, 300 N. Giddings Street, is limited to the first 150 student athletes to register at www.kaweahdelta.org/throwingwise. Cost is $25 per athlete. Attendees will receive a free baseball and have it signed by Rawhide mascot and Holstein Bull par excellence, Tipper.

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Agriculture

Farmers Protect Citrus Crop from Freezing Weather

Steve Adler

San Joaquin Valley citrus, which last year suffered multimillion-dollar losses due to freeze, escaped a similar fate at the turn of the new year, even though temperatures dropped to well below freezing.

Central Valley citrus groves faced six nights of below-freezing temperatures, but California Citrus Mutual says fruit escaped serious damage from the freeze. Photo: Kate Campbell

The entire state felt the impact of a cold front that moved through California from Canada, and it was a particular concern in the citrus belt that extends north from Kern County to Madera County.

Cold temperatures prevailed throughout citrus-growing areas for six nights, prompting growers to activate their frost-protection measures. California Citrus Mutual said groves in Riverside, Kern, Tulare, Fresno and Madera counties all experienced temperatures dropping to 26-29 degrees for short durations.

CCM President Joel Nelsen said there could be "isolated areas of damage" to mandarin groves, particularly to trees and fruit farthest from wind machines, but he said any losses "should not affect volume or price significantly."

The two primary citrus crops grown in the citrus belt are navel oranges and mandarins. Of the two, navels are more cold-tolerant and typically become vulnerable to frost only when temperatures drop below 28 degrees for several hours or for several nights in a row. Mandarins, on the other hand, can suffer freeze damage once temperatures dip below 32 degrees.

Any damaged fruit that won't pass quality standards to go into the fresh market would go to processing, said Bob Blakely, CCM vice president.

The current citrus harvest began a few weeks ago, and an estimated 75 percent of the fruit remained on the trees when the cold weather began. Growers use wind machines or irrigation systems, or a combination of both, as frost-protection measures. By irrigating, growers can elevate the ground temperature slightly. Wind machines help to keep the air moving, breaking up pockets of cold air that can create problems.

Citrus Mutual estimated there are more than 22,000 wind machines throughout the citrus belt, most of which operate on propane. The organization estimated Monday that farmers had spent more than $16.5 million on frost-protection measures during the six-night freeze operation.

Given the drought situation, Nelsen said, most growers remained "very judicious" in using groundwater for frost protection.

"Our information is that pumping groundwater has been minimal," he said.

One of the most water-starved areas is Terra Bella in Tulare County, where many farmers bought emergency water at high prices last summer to keep citrus trees from dying in the drought. Many of those growers have a little bit of that water left, and said they were using it to protect their groves from frost.

"On our farm, we bought some emergency water last summer and we still have some of that available to us until February," said Roger Everett, a citrus grower in Terra Bella, "so we are using that water that we have left for frost protection. Growers who didn't buy any of that water probably don't have any water available for frost protection."

Everett said it has been his experience that citrus trees are able to tolerate the cold fairly well, but the fruit can be vulnerable. Blakely of CCM agreed with that assessment.

"In California, it is typically a case of lost fruit rather than a killing of the trees," he said. "Our conditions here in this state are such that in the wintertime we have enough cold temperatures where the trees can go into a quasi-dormancy, where they can withstand quite low temperatures before we have any damage to the fruiting wood."

The freezing temperatures came just over a year from a December 2013 freeze that caused an estimated $441 million in citrus losses.

Consumer demand for navels has been quite good, bringing "decent" prices to farmers, Blakely said.

"Prices were higher a few weeks ago, but we are starting to see them come off a little bit. Consumer acceptance of the fruit has been very good and demand has remained steady. Movement in the domestic market last year was actually higher than it was in the previous year. In the wintertime, there really aren't any other producing areas that are providing navel oranges to the United States. However, if there is an event that causes a reduction in the California crop, some of that market could possibly be taken up by some of the European mandarins," he said.

San Joaquin Valley citrus wasn't the only crop or region that faced potential crop losses due to the freezing weather. Temperatures of below 32 degrees were recorded in the Coachella Valley as well as the desert areas of the Imperial Valley and Yuma, Ariz. The cold temperatures caused some reported production losses to all varieties of lettuce as well as to spinach. As a result, customers might see some short-term shortages in the next couple weeks, farmers and shippers said.

The Coachella and Imperial valleys and the Yuma area produce about 90 percent of the nation's winter vegetables. Cold weather slows plant growth and delays the daily harvest activity until the plants begin to thaw in late morning or early afternoon.

(Steve Adler is associate editor of Ag Alert. He may be contacted at sadler@cfbf.com.)

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World Ag Expo Introduces Guided Educational Tours

This year, for the first time, World Ag Expo will offer guided educational school tours to students in grades 9 through 12 during the 2015 World Ag Expo.

Attendees from all over the world come to World Ag Expo, a production of International Agri-Center (IAC), to see the newest pieces of equipment and the latest innovations for their agricultural operations. Some of these attendees are students, and many local schools pre-schedule a day off so students may attend World Ag Expo to learn more about the area's ag industry.

"To better serve our students in ag education, we developed a guided tour, so students would be learning while still enjoying World Ag Expo. We are particularly focused on highlighting the many different careers in agriculture," said Kerissa Chapman, IAC's AgVentures! and Ag Education Coordinator.

"The Central Valley is an incredibly diverse agricultural area. Educating students about that is a top priority for us." Tours are geared toward high-school students, who may be determining what they'd like to do in the future. Chapman noted, "Even if students don't ultimately go into agriculture, they are actively learning where their food and clothes come from."

During the tours, which will run during the days of the show, February 10-12, 2015, students will be taken around to multiple exhibitors and different display areas. Teachers are encouraged to contact Chapman to get more information and to sign-up.

If your school would like to participate in World Ag Expo's guided tours, please contact Kerissa Chapman by e-mail, Kerissa@farmshow.org or phone: 559-688-1030.

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"Castle Rocks with Morning Star," by Mona Selph.

Arts Visalia

Continued from p. 17

how long or wide, how light or dark, in the context of every other brushstroke to express the exact feeling I am painting. Look for melodies and arpeggios and accented staccato marks. In all of my art, I celebrate."

Mona Selph's paintings employ a softer palette and brushwork in her landscapes, pieces which she describes as being an "ongoing expression of the deep connection I feel between the majestic beauty of the Earth and the core of my soul as an artist." Also a writer, Selph's works reflect the subject matter of her poems and writing, which is often rooted in the surroundings of her home foothills home. "Living in Three Rivers," she states, "surrounded by beautiful foothills and mountains has been another special gift for me these many years. The seasons change, storms come and go, time shadows and cloud shadows move across the land. Night comes and the full moon rises to light the undulating forms of the hills. Landscapes become dreamscapes, and dreamscapes become landscapes."

Abby Rubinstein has enjoyed a long and well-recognized career as a painter. To this day, she remains one of the most prolific artists of our Central California region. Her works, very much rooted in the tradition of the Expressionist movement, reflect the people and the ideas of her times. About her work she writes, "I use this as my vehicle, bending it and developing it until it speaks for me and meets others with whom it can have a conversation. I am interested in using nature, not copying it."

Arts Visalia is located at 214 E. Oak Ave., Visalia and open to the public Wednesday through Saturday from noon to 5:30pm. Admission is free.

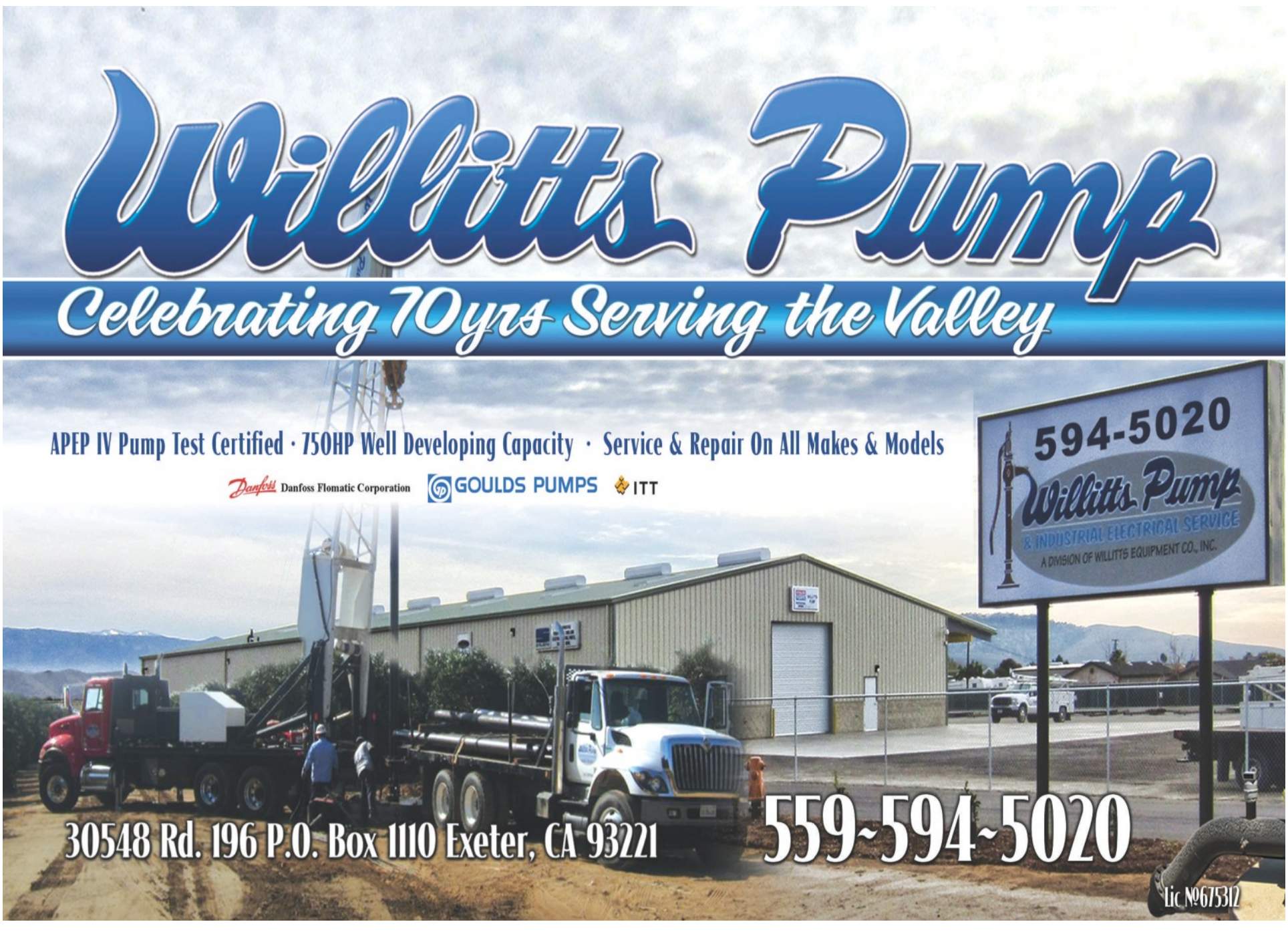
Exeter Rings in the New Year with Doo Dah Parade and "Midnight" Fireworks

Catherine Doe

The Exeter Lions Club put on another successful citywide New Year's Eve party with the help of Ben Weldon Insurance. The Doo Dah Parade started at 6pm and, as always, lived up to its name in creativity and entertainment. Parade entrants braved a remarkably chilly evening and, with more entries and attendees than last year, competition was fierce for the cash prizes.

Doo Dah Dynasty won first place for embodying the essence of what it means to be in a Doo Dah Parade, winning the grand prize of $500--which they donated to the Exeter High School swim team and USA Wounded Warrior. Exeter Hobbies, who also placed last year, went home with second place and $300. Exeter Hobbies shot their remote control cars and trucks into the air doing acrobatic flips off a portable ramp. Third place and $200 went to Peter Hickey's traveling flea circus, while fourth place went to the "Environmental Sleigh" which Chihuahuas, instead of reindeer, lead. They took home $100 in prize money.

After the parade everyone scurried to their favorite restaurant as those who dawdled had to wait for a table. There was also a beer garden and live music put on by the Branded Heart Band. In the spirit of "It's Cocktail Time Somewhere," the Lions Club decided to celebrate the New Year with fireworks a la New York--"midnight"--at 9pm. The fireworks show took place on Palm and F Streets, in front of the fire station. All events were put on free by the Exeter Lions Club under the sponsorship of Ben Weldon State Farm Insurance.

"Doo Dah Dynasty," first-place winners of the Doo Dah Parade.

"We do it for the community," said Bob Serry 20-year member of the Lions Club, "and we appreciate everyone who participates and enjoys the show. Everyone is welcome in Exeter."